THE AWARD-WINNING INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER

Juan
DÍAZ CANALES

Juanjo
GUARNIDO

DARK HORSE BOOKS *presents*

BLACKSAD™

COLLECTED STORIES

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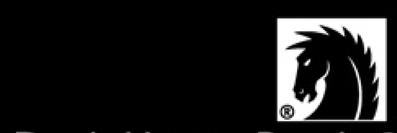
COLLECTED STORIES

Created by

JUAN DÍAZ CANALES

and

JUANJO GUARNIDO



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INTRODUCTION

If it's true that cats have nine lives, then John Blacksad must have a few dozen.

While there's a long aesthetic tradition of animals in the comics, Guarnido and Díaz Canales are obviously in the process of establishing their own. Initially defined by the term "funny animals"—which suggests a range between cute and cuddly—the genre was never quite devoid of sledgehammer violence, mysterious doings, and sometimes even a little sex. And that was prior to the liberation of the form in the 1960s, after which four-footed creatures behaved more like real people than most comic-book characters, thanks to Crumb and company.

Blacksad takes the trend to another level. Rather than animals who act like people, the creators' approach is predicated on people who resemble animals. There's a major difference and it's not as remote as it seems. Who hasn't likened a shrill librarian to a bird or a construction worker to a bear or an old aunt to a cow? By animalizing their characters, Guarnido and Díaz Canales invite readers to enter an arena where the animals are somewhat less than funny—one that's relatively easy to accept because the premise is so charming and skillfully conceived, not unlike James Gurney's *Dinotopia* or Bob Zemeckis's *Who Framed Roger Rabbit.*

In *Blacksad*'s world, the characters are generally unconcerned about their zoological differences; they are cast for their natures and personalities. To the perceptive reader, it's almost impossible not to see a trace of slinky Lauren Bacall in Natalia Wilford or burly Ernie Borgnine in Jake Ostiombe or slippery James Woods in the lizard. It's no accident that, down to the last bit player, they've all been visually crafted to reflect their intrinsic qualities—which might just qualify as overt symbolism. Or simple typecasting.

While his draftsmanship is as superb as it is appealing, Guarnido's sharpest and most persuasive ability is apparent in the emotional nuances and facial expressions of his characters, easily the equal of any Disney effort on record. There is a compelling maturity about his art that seems to invest his anthropomorphic cast with experience, vitality, and even dignity. He gets more out of his animal faces than most artists do from people faces. The trick, of course, is making it look easy, like a trapeze artist who throws a triple so flawlessly that the audience believes they could do it, too.

That is no easy task. Here's the universal equation: the easier it looks, the more study, the more practice, the more dedication it takes.

The real pros, however, never allow their relentless quest for discipline and sacrifice to show. But it's there, if you know how to look for it. And while you're looking, don't miss the interesting narrative approach that Guarnido lavishes on his pages, an amalgam of traditional European comics storytelling and American cinematic style. The latter is a critical aspect in the artist's vision and one he leans on heavily in both concept and execution.

Blacksad's adventures are, in many ways, like films on paper. Díaz Canales taps into the dark heart of stateside noir thrillers (not to suggest that Europe, especially France, doesn't have its fair share) for his structural elements: first-person narration, revealing flashbacks, and a nightmarish chiaroscuro of predatory characters in stark silhouette, cluttered offices, grids of venetian blinds, shadowy stairwells, and architectural canyons of iron and concrete illuminated by a maze of flashing neon.

Classic noir themes developed in the pulps by Hammett, Chandler, Goodis, Whitfield, Nebel, Woolrich, and Cain, among others, are manifest in Blacksad's search for justice. His bitter manhunt thrusts him through a gauntlet of corruption, betrayal, obsessive sexuality, alienation, and revenge that mirrors the most memorable genre efforts of RKO Pictures and Warner Bros. during the era of black-and-white B movies.

Particularly notable are Guarnido's muted color passages, giving the impression of the '40s and '50s crime thrillers that have come to define the noir experience. His use of light and shadow is no less memorable, and he often utilizes illumination—sometimes the lack of it—to underscore the drama twisting Blacksad through an urban landscape riddled with mystery, violence, and passion.

Curiosity may have killed some cats, but not this one.

He's too tough.

STERANKO

World-renowned Renaissance man Jim Steranko is a painter and illustrator who, among his many achievements, revolutionized American comic-book storytelling in the late 1960s and designed the look of adventurer Indiana Jones.

SOMEWHERE *within the* SHADOWS

Written by

JUAN DIAZ CANALES

Art by

JUANJO GUARNIDO

Lettering by

STUDIO CUTIE

Preceding:
The American cover to this album as published by iBooks, December 2003

THERE ARE MORNINGS WHEN YOU HAVE TROUBLE DIGESTING YOUR BREAKFAST... ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF IN FRONT OF THE DEAD BODY OF AN OLD FLAME...

...THE REMAINS OF A BEAUTIFUL DREAM.

DO YOU RECOGNIZE HER?

YES. DID YOU FIND SOMETHING?

ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. NO WEAPON, NO MOTIVE, NO SUSPECT...

I THOUGHT YOU COULD HELP US...

I HADN'T SEEN HER FOR A LONG TIME...

...TOO LONG.

ALL RIGHT. THANKS FOR COMING. YOU MAY LEAVE NOW.

SOMETHING TELLS ME THIS WASN'T A ROBBERY.

LISTEN TO ME, JOHN, AND PAY ATTENTION. FOR EVERYBODY'S SAKE, FOLLOW MY ADVICE AND KEEP YOUR MUZZLE OUT OF THIS CASE.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND, BLACKSAD?

GO TO HELL, SMIRNOV.

SOMETIMES, WHEN I WALK INTO MY OFFICE, I GET THE FEELING THAT I'M WALKING AMONG THE RUINS OF A LOST CIVILIZATION. NOT BECAUSE OF ALL THE REIGNING DISORDER, BUT BECAUSE IT ALL SEEMS TO BE THE REMAINS OF THAT CIVILIZED PERSON I USED TO BE.

BUT ALL THAT WAS IN THE PAST. A PAST THAT WAS STARING BACK AT ME FROM THE FRONT PAGE OF THE NEWSPAPER...

the Inquirer
FAMOUS ACTRESS NATALIA WILFORD MURDERED AT HOME

...A "STAR."

THOUGH NATALIA DIDN'T SHINE LIKE A STAR THE FIRST TIME I MET HER. ON THE CONTRARY, HER FACE DIDN'T REFLECT ANYTHING, EXCEPT--

--THE PALENESS OF FEAR.

3

I FOUND IT WEIRD THAT SOMEBODY WOULD BE SO WORRIED ABOUT RECEIVING SO MANY EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE AND ADMIRATION FROM HER FANS...

Enjoy your flowers and the last days of your life, bitch!

To the Most Beautiful of Future Corpses.

...UNTIL I READ THOSE CARDS.

THE TASK WAS TO DO THE JOB IN A DISCREET AND EFFICIENT WAY. AND WHEN I PUT MY MIND TO IT, I CAN BE VERY DISCREET, AND INDEED--

--EFFICIENT.

SHE WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE RESULTS.

SO MUCH SO THAT SHE DECIDED TO RETAIN MY SERVICES.

THOSE WERE THE HAPPIEST DAYS OF MY LIFE...

5

BUT THE GODDESS WAS ONLY HUMAN, NO DIFFERENT FROM EVERYBODY ELSE, WITH HER OWN PROBLEMS, EMOTIONS...

...ASPIRATIONS...

AND, SINCE NOBODY'S PERFECT AND PERFECT LOVE DOESN'T EXIST...

...AND WEAKNESSES.

...CIRCUMSTANCES EVENTUALLY TOOK OVER AND TORE US APART.

6

SINCE THEN, I HADN'T SEEN HER...

...UNTIL THAT DAY.

A STAR HAD BEEN ECLIPSED, LEAVING MY PAST IN THE DARKNESS, LOST SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE SHADOWS. AND NOBODY CAN LIVE WITHOUT A PAST.

OUT THERE, HIDING SOMEWHERE, WAS THE GUILTY PARTY. GUILTY OF AT LEAST TWO MURDERS-- HE'D BOTH KILLED A PERSON AND DESTROYED MY MEMORIES.

AND THAT BASTARD WAS GOING TO PAY!

I DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE TO BEGIN WITH, SO I WENT TO VISIT JAKE OSTIOMBE, AN OLD FRIEND.

JOE!

JAKE WAS A HEAVYWEIGHT WHOM I HAD RECOMMENDED AS A BODYGUARD TO NATALIA...

...AND, FRANKLY, I BELIEVE IT WAS A GOOD IDEA.

I SEE YOU STILL HIT HARD, JAKE.

THUMP

LET'S JUST SAY I DEFEND MYSELF. WHAT BRINGS YOU AROUND, JOHN?

THWOMP!

IT'S ABOUT NATALIA. I'M INVESTIGATING HER DEATH AND I NEED SOMETHING TO START WITH.

WELL, THERE AIN'T MUCH TO TELL. SHE FIRED ME A LONG TIME AGO. SHE SAID SHE DIDN'T NEED ME ANYMORE, THAT SHE HAD HER OWN SECURITY SERVICE.

IN FACT, THE TOUGH GUYS AROUND HER MUST HAVE BEEN PAID FOR BY ONE OF HER MANY "ADMIRERS."

I SEE. AND DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAMES OF ANY OF THOSE "ADMIRERS"?

LAST ONE I HEARD ABOUT WAS SOME "LEON," BUT I DON'T REMEMBER NOTHING ELSE.

MEMORY AIN'T ONE OF MY STRONGER POINTS.

THAT'LL DO. THANK YOU, JAKE.

HEY, JOHN! AS YOU CAN SEE, SHE DIDN'T MISS YOU MUCH!

LEON KRONSKI,
FILM SCRIPTWRITER.

THE NAME AND PROFESSION OF NATALIA'S LAST LOVER.

IT SEEMED THAT LEON HAD LEFT HOME IN A HURRY, LIKE HE WAS RUNNING FROM SOMETHING, WHICH MADE HIM THE MAIN SUSPECT.

BUT SOMETHING DIDN'T FIT. THAT PLACE DIDN'T LOOK LIKE THE APARTMENT OF SOMEONE WHO COULD AFFORD A PRIVATE SECURITY SERVICE.

CLIC
CLAC

10

OH, MY GOODNESS!! YOU SCARED ME! BUT--WHO ARE YOU?

I'M A CLOSE FRIEND OF MR. KRONSKI'S. I HAVE THE KEYS TO THE APARTMENT, SO I CAME TO PICK UP A BOOK THAT I'D LENT HIM. YOU KNOW, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO LOCATE HIM FOR DAYS WITHOUT ANY SUCCESS.

DO YOU KNOW IF HE'S LEFT TOWN?

YES, HE'S ON A TRIP...OR A LEAST THAT'S WHAT HIS OTHER FRIEND TOLD ME.

ANOTHER FRIEND?

WELL, TRUTH TO TELL, I DON'T REMEMBER HIM SAYING HIS NAME...

BUT I DO REMEMBER THOSE BULGING EYES!

?

11

Natal
WIL

Zenuck Fil
Presents
Sellers
IN FRANK
GOAT'S
My
PRIDE and Joy

I TOLD YOU TO GET ME A SAXOPHONIST...!

THE NEIGHBOR

ENUCK
TUDIOS

AND WHAT I HAVE HERE IS A XYLOPHONIST!!

OF COURSE IT'S NOT THE SAME THING, A SAXOPHONE AND A XYLOPHONE!

GO TO HELL!

PAT

MISS, DO ME A FAVOR AND GET THIS PERSON OUT OF MY SIGHT!

AND DON'T PUT THROUGH ANY MORE CALLS THIS MORNING.

I'M SURROUNDED BY INCOMPETENTS!

12

GIVE ME GOOD NEWS OR GET OUT!

GOOD MORNING, MR. ZENUCK. I'M J.H. BLACKMORE FROM SMOKE AGENCY DEBT COLLECTORS.

I'M LOOKING FOR A MR. LEON KRONSKI... OBVIOUSLY CONCERNING A MONEY PROBLEM.

SMOKE S.A. DEBT COLLECTORS J.H. BLACKMORE

SO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR LEON! WELL YOU JUST LET ME KNOW IF YOU FIND HIM!

CRACK!

AND...IF YOU NEED A CONTRIBUTION IN ORDER TO BREAK HIS LEGS, LET ME BE THE FIRST ONE TO DONATE.

FIRST THE MAIN ACTRESS GETS MURDERED AND NOW THE SCRIPTWRITER RUNS AWAY!

UH...THEN... YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS?

13

OF COURSE NOT! HIS FRIEND, THE GUY WHO CAME TO TELL MY SECRETARY THAT LEON WAS LEAVING, DIDN'T SAY WHERE THE HELL HE WAS *GOING!*

A FELLOW WITH BULGING EYES?

IN FRANK GOAT'S

ONE THING WAS CLEAR: IN ORDER TO FIND LEON, I WOULD FIRST HAVE TO FIND HIS MYSTERIOUS FRIEND...

...WHO AT THAT MOMENT, WHILE I WAS DEEP IN THOUGHT, WAS STABBING MY BACK WITH HIS STARE...

CLICK!

...AND MY GUTS WITH HIS KNIFE...

THE GUY REALLY GOT INTO HIS ROLE OF "JACK THE RIPPER." A BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE, THAT INCLUDED VANISHING INTO THE FOG WITHOUT A TRACE...

THAT IS, EXCEPT FOR ONE TINY DETAIL. I DON'T BELIEVE A DETECTIVE EXISTS WHO LIKES TO SEE HIS TRENCH COAT RUINED...

I WOULDN'T GET A SECOND CHANCE...

14

JUST HIS BAD LUCK THAT I WASN'T SOME DEFENSELESS PUSSY...

AND I KNEW A FEW DIRTY TRICKS...LEARNED IN THE GUTTERS.

NOW, PRETTY FACE, ANSWER ME:

WHERE IS OUR GOOD FRIEND LEON HIDING?

AOUGH!

I SHOULDN'T HAVE UNDERESTIMATED HIM. IN THE END HE PROVED A RESOURCEFUL ACTOR.

OH! WHAT A BEAUTIFUL COLEOPTERA SPECIMEN.

15

DID YOU KNOW, SON, I LOVE TO COLLECT INSECTS?

CLASSIFY, ORGANIZE...

...IT IS SO SATISFYING TO PUT EACH THING IN ITS PLACE. AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT MAKES THIS HOBBY SO PLEASING?

NO, SIR.

OF COURSE YOU DON'T. I'M GOING TO TELL YOU: ITS *USELESSNESS*. IT HAS NO PURPOSE; THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF IT. IF IT HAD A PURPOSE IT WOULD LOSE ITS CHARM.

16

THAT'S LIFE-- WHEN SOMETHING STOPS BEING USEFUL... ZAP!!

YOU STAB IT WITH A PIN AND IT BECOMES A COLLECTIBLE.

WELL, I HOPE YOU SEE THE IDEA. YOU MAY LEAVE NOW. AND LET ME TAKE CARE OF THAT CAT. YOU WORRY SO MUCH ABOUT IT THAT IT'S STARTING TO LOOK AS THOUGH YOU HAVE SOMETHING PERSONAL AGAINST HIM.

THANK YOU, SIR.

LOYALTY... THAT'S ALL I'M ASKING, SON.

YOU'LL BE DOING ME A BIG FAVOR IF YOU CATCH THE INSECT THAT JUST FLEW THROUGH THAT DOOR. AM I WRONG, OR DOES HE HAVE SOMETHING THAT BELONGS TO ME?

AH! AND CAREFUL WITH THE PINS.

Sale on GOLD
50%
DRASTIC REDUCTION
50% OFF
SALE
IMPORTERS

UNION
LANKERSHIM
BEER
POOL
319
la Iguana
LIQUORS
Rheingold
EXTRA DRY
POOL

HEY, BRO!
WHAT'S UP?
HELLO, BOYS.
YOU SPARE A CIGARETTE, BIG GUY?

HI, PAULIE.

HEY KID.

LISTEN, DO YOU STILL HAVE THAT PACKAGE I GAVE YOU?

OF COURSE.

PERFECT!

LISTEN, PAULIE. THERE'S SOMEONE TAILING ME. MIND IF I LEAVE THROUGH THE BACK?

NO PROBLEM.

DON'T WORRY, WE'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING.

!

?

SCREEEEEECH!..

TSK, TSK, TSK... I WOULD SAY YOU'RE IN THE WRONG HOLE...

AHHK!

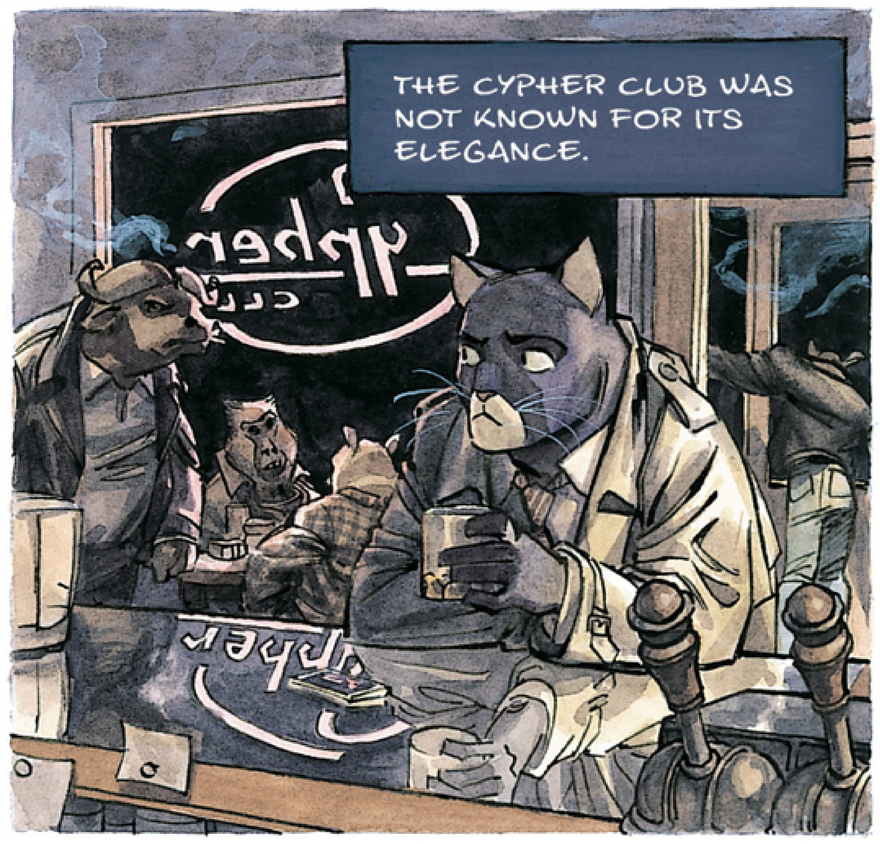
...PAL.

HAIRY GUYS LIKE YOU ARE NOT TOO WELCOME HERE.

GULP!

20

Cypher
CLUB


THE CYPHER CLUB WAS NOT KNOWN FOR ITS ELEGANCE.

IT TRULY WASN'T THE TYPE OF PLACE THAT NATALIA WOULD FREQUENT...

...UNLESS SHE'D DONE IT TO PLEASE LEON OR TO HIDE FROM SOMEBODY.

LET'S SEE... LEON, LEON...
BLUES, BLUES, BLUES
with LOU

GOT IT! HE WAS THE ONE WITH THAT GORGEOUS GIRL!

SHE MUST HAVE BEEN AN ACTRESS OR SOMETHING. TAKE MY WORD FOR IT, I GOT THE EYE.

I SEE. AND WHAT ABOUT THAT GUY, LEON?

I'VE NO IDEA. TRUTH IS, IT'S BEEN SOME TIME SINCE THEY LAST CAME IN HERE.

HEY, FRIEND--!

COULDN'T HELP OVERHEARING. YOU KNOW, I COULD TAKE YOU TO LEON...FOR A PRICE, OF COURSE!

I'M GOIN' DOWN TO THE CEMETERY, 'CAUSE THE WORLD IS ALL DONE WRONG...YEAH, WAY DOWN THERE WITH ALL THE SPOOKS, TO HEAR 'EM SING MY SORROW SONG...*

FROM THE START, I FELT REPULSED BY MY NEW "FRIEND"...

...A MATTER OF INSTINCT.

22

*"CEMETERY BLUES," WRITTEN BY SID LANEY IN 1923.

NOIFMOUTH CEMETERY

ANYWAY, THE RAT HONORED HIS PART OF THE CONTRACT.

RIP
NOEL KRISNOK
1916

HE WAS THERE, RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME--
GOOD OLD "LEON."

MY SEARCH HAD COME TO AN END IN FRONT OF A SINISTER RIDDLE: NOEL KRISNOK WAS AN ANAGRAM OF LEON KRONSKI. TWO NAMES FOR ONE CORPSE.

WHAT POSSIBLE SIN COULD HE HAVE COMMITTED TO DESERVE DEATH? LOVING THE WRONG WOMAN?

IF THAT WAS THE CASE...

23

...I WAS DAMNED, TOO.

THE RAT HAD SLIPPED AWAY...

...INSTINCT IS ALMOST NEVER WRONG.

?

HEY, YOU-- PRIVATE EYE. WE GOT A MESSAGE FOR YOU.

PAF

24

HOW TO DESCRIBE THOSE GUYS?

IT WAS AS IF THE TOMBS' MARBLE GARGOYLES HAD SUDDENLY COME TO LIFE.

AND THIS WAS LESS FROM THEIR SCARY LOOKS THAN THEIR HARDNESS.

PUNCHING BACK WAS LIKE HITTING A STONE WALL.

ALL THE SAME, THERE'S A WORD THAT WOULD DESCRIBE THEM PERFECTLY:

PROFESSIONAL.

HOPE YOU GOT THE MESSAGE. IF NOT, WE WOULDN'T MIND REPEATING IT.

FUCK YOU...

PAF!

IDIOT!

25

I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I LAY UNCONSCIOUS AMONG THE BURIED DEAD...

WHAT I DO KNOW IS THAT WHEN I WOKE UP, I FELT KINDA AT HOME.

MUCH LATER, I FOUND MYSELF STUMBLING TO MY APARTMENT WITH THE FEELING THAT I HAD AGED TWENTY YEARS IN A SINGLE DAY.

BUT IN THIS CITY, NO ONE RESPECTS THE ELDERLY ANYMORE.

LYING BEATEN UP ON THAT COT, THE ONLY PART OF MY BODY STILL WORKING WAS MY BRAIN.

LEON, NATALIA'S LAST LOVER, HAD GONE UNDER A FAKE NAME ON A TRIP TO "SEE THE OTHER SIDE."

ELIMINATING AND ERASING A PERSON'S TRACKS ISN'T SOMETHING THAT JUST ANYONE CAN DO. ONLY SOMEONE VERY POWERFUL CAN PERMIT THEMSELVES THE LUXURY OF HAVING A MAN DISCREETLY MURDERED.

SOMEONE, BUT...WHO?

26

THE HUMIDITY SEEPED INTO MY BONES AND IT WOULDN'T BE TOO LONG BEFORE SMIRNOV STARTED GNAWING ON WHAT WAS LEFT OF THEM. WITH THIS COMFORTING IMAGE IN MY HEAD, I FELL ASLEEP.

I DREAMT OF HER.

IN THE MORNING, I WOKE UP DEPRESSED.

GOOD MORNING, BLACKSAD.

COME IN AND GET COMFORTABLE, CHIEF. MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.

I IMAGINE...

...YOU'RE CURIOUS TO KNOW WHY YOU'RE IN JAIL.

WELL YOU KNOW, SMIRNOV, I'M STARTING TO BELIEVE THAT OLD SAYING, "CURIOSITY KILLED THE CAT."

27

LISTEN, BLACKSAD-- THAT WILFORD CASE IS GETTING MUCH TOO HOT. I'VE ARRESTED YOU IN ORDER TO SPARE YOU SOME PROBLEMS.

AS YOU CAN SEE, YOU WERE A LITTLE LATE. THEY MADE A MEAL OUT OF MY FACE.

BAH! THAT'S NOTHING. I WOULDN'T THINK THAT BEING A BIT UGLIER FOR A LITTLE WHILE WOULD MATTER MUCH. CIGARETTE?

DON'T PUT ON THAT POKER FACE, JOHN. I HAVE SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT TO TELL YOU.

MY INVESTIGATIONS ARE POINTING VERY HIGH. SO I'VE BEEN GIVEN THE ORDER TO BURY THIS CASE.

28

AND I'VE GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO GIVE IN. THESE BASTARDS KNOW WHERE TO SQUEEZE.

I'M OUT OF THE GAME, BUT YOU'RE NOT. THIS IS MY PROPOSITION: ELIMINATE THE MURDERING SON OF A BITCH AND I'LL PERSONALLY COVER YOUR BACK.

!

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS, SMIRNOV?

I LIKE TO IMAGINE A BETTER WORLD, WHERE EVEN THE POWERFUL PAY THEIR DEBTS.

DEEP DOWN, I AM NAÏVE.

EVEN AFTER WHAT HAD HAPPENED, I FELT A LITTLE HAPPIER. I WAS COMING BACK HOME, AND HAD MADE A POWERFUL ALLY.

THE NEXT STEP WAS TO FIND MY BULGING-EYED BUDDY, BUT FIRST...

...A MUCH-NEEDED HOT SHOWER.

SUDDENLY, I FELT A CHILL, AND THE SENSATION OF...

SURPRISE!

THAT HOT SHOWER WOULD HAVE TO WAIT.

LET'S GET SOMETHING STRAIGHT. SIT DOWN AND BE QUIET.

PAF!

AW!

YOU AND I HAVE A COMPATABILITY PROBLEM.

AND FRANKLY, I DON'T INTEND TO GIVE UP A SINGLE DOLLAR.

I'VE BEEN THAT BASTARD'S RIGHT HAND FOR TOO MANY YEARS. FAR TOO MANY TO ALLOW A JACKASS LIKE YOU TO COME IN AND TRY TO STEAL MY GAME NOW.

LOOK: I'VE GOT THE WEAPON THAT KILLED THAT BITCH, COMPLETE WITH THE PRINTS FROM HIS DIRTY FINGERS SIGNING THE CRIME.

AND YOU. WHAT DO YOU HAVE? THE GUN HE USED TO KILL LEON, MAYBE?

THE LIZARD WAS A BLACKMAILER. AND, KNOWING I WAS WORKING ALONE, HE FIGURED THAT I ALSO WANTED TO MAKE MONEY OFF THE AFFAIR.

ANSWER ME!!

31

BLAM!!

BLAM

BLAMM

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

32

THERE ARE A LOT OF CLICHÉS ABOUT US CATS. ONE SAYS THAT WE HAVE NINE LIVES.

I'VE HONESTLY NEVER REALLY WANTED TO FIND OUT IF THAT'S TRUE OR NOT.

IT'S ALSO SAID THAT WE'VE GOT SOMETHING PERSONAL AGAINST RATS. THAT ONE'S TRUE. EVEN MORE SO IF THEY MAKE THE MISTAKE OF SLIPPING INTO YOUR DEN WITH A GUN.

WE ARE NOTHING... RIGHT, CAT?

SPENT SO MUCH TIME WAITING FOR MY CHANCE AND WHEN IT FINALLY HAPPENS, IT ALL FALLS TO PIECES...

I'VE ENDURED ALL KINDS OF HUMILIATION, BUT I ALWAYS THOUGHT ABOUT THE DAY WHEN I WOULD GET EVEN...

HUH... NO THANKS, DON'T SMOKE.

I GOT MY CHANCE WHEN HE STARTED SEEING THE ACTRESS.

"EVERYTHING WAS GOING SMOOTHLY, KEPT PERFECTLY QUIET, THE WAY ***HE*** HAD ORDERED IT. I WAS IN CHARGE OF DISCREETLY DELIVERING HER TO AND RETURNING HER FROM THEIR DATES, AVOIDING ALL PUBLICITY.

"STILL, BEING THE JEALOUS TYPE BY NATURE, HE HIRED THE RAT TO SPY ON HER. IT SEEMS SHE WASN'T A ONE-MAN WOMAN-- UNFORTUNATELY FOR HER AND LEON.

"IT'S NOT VERY PLEASANT TO WATCH SOMEONE DIE, AND EVEN LESS SO THE WAY HE WENT. I CAN STILL HEAR HIS SCREAMS. ***HE*** TOOK HIS TIME WITH GIVING LEON THE COUP DE GRÂCE.

34

"AND WITH THE SAME COLD BLOOD HE PERSONALLY KILLED HIS OWN GIRL. WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A FLINCH, HE BLEW HER BRAINS OUT."
BECAUSE IVO STATOC IS A SORE LOSER...
BUT I... LOOK AT ME... I'VE ALWAYS BEEN JUST A LOSER.
IVO STATOC.
35

MY NIGHTMARES HAD A NAME THEN.

SMIRNOV WASN'T WRONG. THE INVESTIGATIONS POINTED VERY HIGH INDEED.

SUCH AS THE TOP FLOOR OF THE STATOC TOWER, HOME TO THE OFFICES OF THE RICHEST GUY IN TOWN.

IVO STATOC WAS ONE OF THOSE *SELF-MADE* MILLIONAIRES WHO DIDN'T CARE WHO THEY HAD TO RUN OVER IN ORDER TO MAKE IT.

STAFF ONLY

A PERSON RICH IN PRIVILEGE AND DIRT-POOR IN MORAL FIBER.

ADAMS & MASSEY LAWYERS

WHO?

?

HEY, YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THERE? WHERE THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

THIS IS A RESTRICTED AREA! DO YOU HEAR ME?!

PERFECTLY.

THAMM!

BWAM!

CRACK!

THAT SAID, WHO CAN CALL THEMSELVES MORAL...

CHAIRMAN

...THESE DAYS?

38

COME IN, COME IN, MY FRIEND. BELIEVE ME, I ADMIRE YOU.

A GOOD HANDYMAN IS WHAT I NEED. NOT ALL THOSE INCOMPETENTS WHO SHOULD HAVE STOPPED YOU FROM GETTING HERE.

SO AS YOU HAVE SEEN, I NEED NEW BLOOD...

PEOPLE LIKE YOU.

HEY NOW, SON, WHY THE SILENT TREATMENT? THAT'S NO WAY TO TREAT SOMEBODY WHO'S OFFERING YOU A JOB.

I DIDN'T COME HERE LOOKING FOR A JOB. IN FACT, MY FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHTER THAN YOURS.

WELL, EVERYTHING IS NEGOTIABLE... WILL A HUNDRED THOUSAND DO JUSTICE TO YOUR SKILLS?

STATOC, YOU'VE GOT A TWISTED IDEA OF JUSTICE. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MONEY. MONEY HAS ITS LIMITS...

...IT CAN'T BRING THE DEAD BACK TO LIFE, AND IT CAN'T QUIET THE CONSCIENCE OF THOSE NEEDING VENGEANCE.

CAN'T EVEN STOP ME FROM KILLING YOU.

HA, HA, HA... THE CONSCIENCE! THAT'S THE REASON WHY YOU CAN'T PULL THE TRIGGER.

YOU ARE MERELY A POOR DEVIL, FULL OF THOSE MORALS AND SCRUPLES.

40

YOU'VE GOT CLASS. BUT YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT, DRAGGING THAT LOAD.

YOU'RE MISSING THE MOST IMPORTANT THING, WHICH ALLOWS A GUY LIKE ME TO GET TO THE TOP...

...COLD BLOOD.

41

IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THAT SMIRK, I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO KILL HIM. BUT THE HARM WAS ALREADY DONE. AND HIS PRECIOUS COLD BLOOD WAS LEAKING ALL OVER HIS DESK.

SMIRNOV WOULD DO THE REST AND MANAGE TO CLOSE THE CASE AS A SUICIDE.

POLICE

NO PARKING
GE STATION

PROBLEMS?

TCH! ROUTINE, A CONFRON-TATION...

I SEE.

43

WELL, GENTLEMEN. IS THIS THE GUY WHO HIT YOU, AND WHO YOU CLAIM ALSO...

...KILLED IVO STATOC? CONCENTRATE, TAKE YOUR TIME.

IT'S HIM-- THE FUCKING DETECTIVE!

HE'S THE KILLER!

KRIK!

TOUGH LUCK, GUYS. THIS MAN'S GOT AN ALIBI: HE WAS IN HIS APARTMENT WHEN ALL THIS HAPPENED. THE LIEUTENANT HERE WAS KEEPING AN EYE ON HIM AS A PRIME SUSPECT IN THE WILFORD MURDER. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, LIEUTENANT?

NOW, NOW... THOSE REMARKS WON'T GET YOU ANYWHERE.

YEP.

SON OF A BITCH!

THAT'S NOT TRUE, YOU LYING BASTARDS! THIS IS ALL A SETUP!

44

LIEUTENANT, CARRY ON WITH THE INTERROGATION. EITHER I'M MISTAKEN OR OUR FRIENDS HERE KNOW A LOT MORE ABOUT THE DEATHS OF NATALIA WILFORD AND LEON KRONSKI.

OKAY.

THIS IS A JOKE!

FUCKERS!

I WANT TO TALK TO MY LAWYER!

THE TRUTH IS, JOHN... I USED TO SEE CLEARLY, BUT NOW...

...ANYWAY, WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS THAT I'M NOT TOO PROUD OF MYSELF. I DON'T HAVE A CLEAN CONSCIENCE, AND IT'S A VERY UNPLEASANT FEELING.

45

CHIEF, THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH HAVING A CONSCIENCE. I'LL BE SEEING YOU.

GOODBYE, MY FRIEND. TAKE CARE.

THE WHOLE SORDID TALE HAD LEFT A BAD TASTE IN MY MOUTH. I WAS BREATHING IN A VICIOUS ATMOSPHERE OF HATE, VENGEANCE, AND CORRUPTION.

FROM THAT DAY FORWARD, THAT HAS BEEN MY WORLD. A JUNGLE WHERE IT'S SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST-- WHERE PEOPLE ACT LIKE ANIMALS. I HAD CHOSEN TO WALK THE DARK PATH IN LIFE...

...AND I'M STILL ON IT.

END OF EPISODE

46

JUANJO GUARNIDO & JUAN DÍAZ CANALES - 2000

The Inquirer
FAMOUS ACTRESS NATALIA WILFORD MURDERED AT HOME

ARCTIC NATION

Written by

JUAN DIAZ CANALES

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JUANJO GUARNIDO

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Preceding:
The original cover to this album as published by Dargaud, March 2003

ONE DAY, I'LL WRITE MY MEMOIRS.

I'VE LIVED THROUGH AND SEEN SO MANY INCREDIBLE THINGS THAT WHEN PEOPLE READ IT, THEY'LL THINK I JUST MADE IT ALL UP. THAT SO MUCH EVIL COULD NOT POSSIBLY EXIST IN THIS WORLD.

I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF IT ENDED UP PUBLISHED AS A DETECTIVE NOVEL...

...I'M SURE IT WOULD SELL LIKE HOTCAKES. PEOPLE ARE MORBID.

IT WOULD BE IRONIC. I WOULD DIE RICH AND MISUNDERSTOOD.

?!

CLAC!

TOUCHY SUBJECT, THESE RACE CRIMES!

NAME'S WEEKLY, FROM WHAT'S NEWS. AND YOU? WHICH PAPER DO YOU WORK FOR, FRIEND?

FOR BAD NEWS. YOU SHOULD READ MY LATEST STORY. IT'S CALLED "WE'RE NOT FRIENDS."

THAT GUY HAD REALLY TURNED MY STOMACH. WE CATS ARE BLESSED WITH A FINE SENSE OF SMELL, WHICH TURNS INTO A CURSE WHEN YOU RUN INTO A GUY WHO'S ALLERGIC TO SOAP. THE WORST PART WAS THAT HE HAD MISTAKEN ME FOR A TABLOID REPORTER! I MADE TWO DECISIONS ON THE SPOT: STOP TAKING NOTES IN PUBLIC, AND GO SEE MY CLIENT.

MISS GREY WAS A TEACHER IN ONE OF THE FEW SCHOOLS LEFT IN "THE LINE," THE NAME GIVEN TO THIS DEPRESSED SUBURB.

SHE WAS ONE OF THOSE RARE INDIVIDUALS WHO LOOK FRAGILE BUT WHO POSSESS A PROUD AND FIRM TEMPERAMENT. SHE HAD CALLED ON ME TO DIG UP THE WHEREABOUTS OF ONE OF HER YOUNG STUDENTS WHO HAD GONE MISSING.

I KNOW THIS WILL SOUND STRANGE, MR. BLACKSAD...

...BUT NO ONE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD SEEMS TO BE WORRIED ABOUT KAYLIE'S DISAPPEARANCE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, HER OWN MOTHER HASN'T EVEN REPORTED IT.

IT'S SOMETHING I CAN'T UNDERSTAND, ESPECIALLY FOR A WOMAN WHO KNOWS WELL WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE A TOUGH CHILDHOOD. HER MOTHER DIED WHEN SHE WAS VERY YOUNG. AND AS FOR HER FATHER...WELL, SHE NEVER KNEW HIM.

AIR U.S. FORCE

I SEE. TWO GENERATIONS OF SINGLE MOTHERS. WHAT ABOUT THE POLICE?

AS USUAL, THE KIDNAPPING HAS BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO THAT "BLACK CLAWS" GANG.

3

THINGS HAVE CHANGED A LOT AROUND HERE. THIS NEIGHBORHOOD WAS A DREAM WHEN WE FOUNDED IT. WE THOUGHT THAT WE WOULD AT LAST BE ABLE TO ENJOY AN ERA OF PROSPERITY AFTER THE WAR. BUT WE WERE WRONG-- THE CLOSING OF THE PLANE FACTORY BROUGHT UNEMPLOYMENT AND CRIME. THE NEIGHBORHOOD DEGRADED INTO WHAT IT IS TODAY...THE DREAM SUCCUMBED TO A NIGHTMARE.

AND THEN TAKE A LOOK UPTOWN AT OLD MAN OLDSMILL. SOME PEOPLE ARE MASTERS OF FRITTERING THEIR MONEY AWAY, WHILE OTHERS WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR A JOB.

EVEN SO, I SHAN'T GIVE UP. I THINK THAT NOW, MORE THAN EVER, THERE ARE REASONS TO STAY AND FIGHT.

THAT'S VERY NOBLE OF YOU, MISS GREY.

I'LL DO MY BEST TO FIND THE GIRL. DON'T YOU WORRY.

--AND I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR THOSE WHO PRETEND TO BE SHOCKED OVER THE FACT THAT A FEW BRAVE AND HONEST BOYS ARE CLEANING OUR STREETS OF BLACK SCUM AND DRUNKARDS...

...ONE DAY, THE WORLD WILL BE ONCE AGAIN DOMINATED BY THE WHITE RACE! THE RACE THAT GOD HIMSELF PUT ON THIS EARTH TO REIGN OVER THE OTHERS...!

...AND ON THAT DAY, A GREAT SNOWY BLANKET WILL COVER EVERYTHING--

--AND THE EARTH WILL BE PERFECT AND PURE ONCE AGAIN, THE WAY IT WAS AT THE BEGINNING OF TIME!

5

A LITTLE COLD, HIS SPEECH-- DON'T YOU THINK?

!

...

EASY, FRIEND! PEACE, OKAY? HOW'S ABOUT A DRINK TO GET OURSELVES WARMED UP?

FRIENDS... WHY NOT?

AFTER ALL, WE WERE A PAIR OF OUTSIDERS IN AN INHOSPITABLE ENVIRONMENT.

THE LINE IS ON THE VERGE OF EXPLODING. ON THE ONE HAND, WE'VE GOT THESE HUELESS DIMWITS WHO THINK THAT THE WORLD BEGINS AND ENDS AT THE NORTH POLE...

...AND ON THE OTHER HAND WE'VE GOT THE CLAWS, EVERY SINGLE ONE OF 'EM AS BLACK AS COAL.

THEY'RE ALL CRAZY--! SLURRRRP!

SNIF SNIFF

MMM! THIS BOURBON MILKSHAKE IS DELICIOUS! YOU WANNA TASTE IT?

NO THANKS. I DON'T LIKE MILK.

SAY--YOU'RE NOT REALLY A REPORTER, ARE YOU?

CLANG DING DONG

NOT REALLY. I'M ACTUALLY A TOPOGRAPHER.

6

COME ON, SERIOUSLY...THE NOTES YOU WERE TAKING--THEY LOOKED LIKE WHAT A COP WOULD WRITE...

COTTEN, YOU GAMBLING JUNKIE, WE'VE WARNED YOU A THOUSAND TIMES. AND A THOUSAND TIMES, YOU MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE.

AIR U.S. FORCE

NO colored people ALLOWED

HAVEN'T YOU READ THE POSTER?

BOYS, YOU KNOW PERFECTLY WELL THAT THIS OLD FOOL...

...IS REGRETTABLY UNABLE TO ENJOY THE SIGHT OF YOUR LOVELY AND IMMACULTELY WHITE PELTS...

HA!

HA! HA! HA!

BESIDES, I'M NOT BOTHERING ANYBODY. WITH A BIT OF LUCK, I'LL WIN ENOUGH TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE-- GO TO LAS VEGAS AND STOP TARNISHING YOUR VIEW.

WHAT ABOUT YOU TWO? CAN'T YOU READ EITHER?

UH-OH...

THIS HERE ISN'T ENOUGH?

HEY BOYS, LOOK! THIS ONE'S TURNED OUT TO BE A WISE GUY.

TELL ME, YOU PIECE OF TRASH: WOULD YOU LIKE US TO SKIN YOU ALIVE?

WELL...YOU COULD ALWAYS TRY. YOU KNOW, YOURS WOULDN'T MAKE A BAD COAT EITHER...

...THOUGH A BIT SMALL...

I'M GONNA--!

COME ON, CALL CHIEF KARUP.

OKAY, HUK.

K-RRAASH!

YOU SCUM DON'T RESPECT ANYTHING ANYMORE.

NOT THE HIERARCHY, NOR PRIVATE PROPERTY, NOT EVEN MORAL VALUES. WHEREVER YOU GO, YOU BRING TROUBLE...

...AND ANARCHY.

PRETTY DAUGHTER YOU'VE GOT THERE.

AND THERE'S NOTHING THAT BOTHERS A MAN OF LAW SUCH AS MYSELF MORE...

POF!

...THAN A DIRTY, STINKING ANARCHIST.

WELL, NOT ALL OF US SHARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE LAW...

?

SNIF SNIFF

THAT'S FOR CERTAIN. I LIKE THE LAW AS SEEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT-- REMEMBER? "AN EYE FOR AN EYE."

NOWADAYS, THE GUARDIANS OF THE LEGACY OUR FOREFATHERS PASSED TO US AFTER FOUNDING THIS GREAT NATION ARE FEW. DO YOU KNOW WHOM THIS SABER BELONGED TO?

I'M GUESSING IT BELONGED TO GENERAL LEE, THE "ACE OF SPADES." A TRUE ICON FOR DEFENDERS OF LOST CAUSES.

THOUGH IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE OUR CHIEF HERE SIGNS UP FOR *THOSE* KIND OF CAUSES...IN FACT, SOME SAY HE OWES THIS JOB TO OLD MAN OLDSMILL, WHO'S NOT EXACTLY A LOSER HIMSELF...

I'M SURPRISED. I SEE YOU LIKE HISTORY.

IT'S USEFUL TO TRY NOT TO REPEAT THE SAME MISTAKES OF THE PAST.

YOUR WIFE IS HERE, CHIEF.

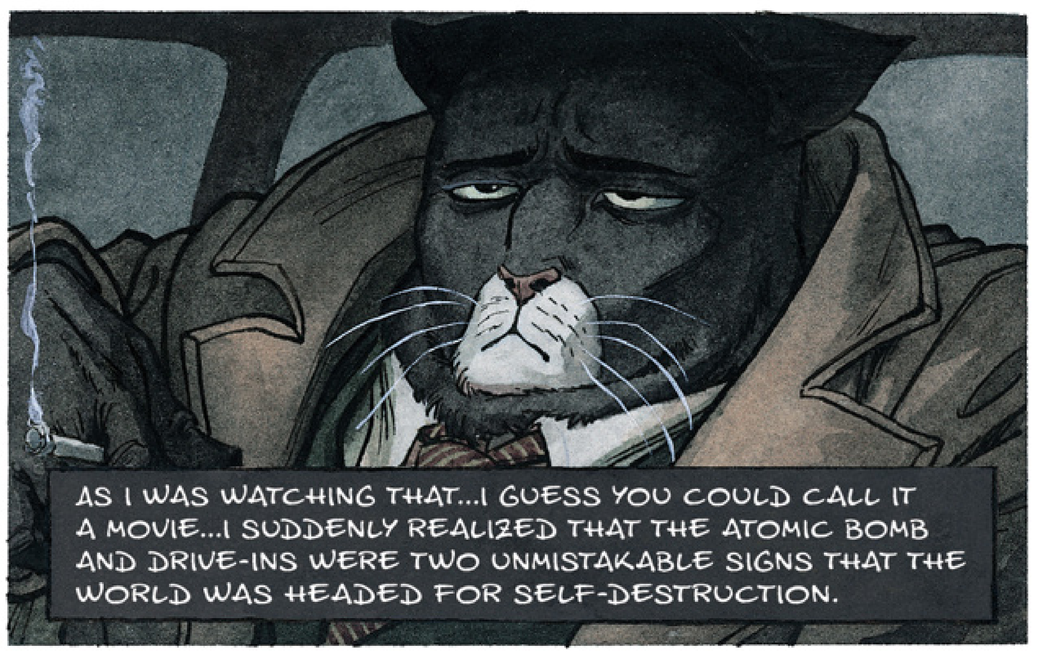
UH...WELL, I HOPE YOU'VE LEARNED YOUR LESSON. GET OUT OF HERE AND STOP NOSING FOR TROUBLE. AS YOU HAVE SEEN, YOU ARE NOT WELCOME HERE IN THE LINE.

THANKS FOR THE TIP.

AUTOMOBILE
NOW!
THEM!
FLOWER STREET

MR. PRESIDENT, MEET DR. HOWARD. HE IS OUR MAN--THE ONE WE NEED.

OUR FATE IS IN YOUR HANDS, DOC.


AS I WAS WATCHING THAT...I GUESS YOU COULD CALL IT A MOVIE...I SUDDENLY REALIZED THAT THE ATOMIC BOMB AND DRIVE-INS WERE TWO UNMISTAKABLE SIGNS THAT THE WORLD WAS HEADED FOR SELF-DESTRUCTION.

BUT I WASN'T THERE TO WATCH THAT CRAP ALONG WITH THE TEENAGE MAKE-OUT CLUB. ACTUALLY, I WAS THERE ON BUSINESS...
...AND I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE.
I WAS LOOKING FOR DINAH, KAYLIE'S MOTHER.
WHAT'LL IT BE?

I'LL HAVE A MEETING IN A QUIETER PLACE THAN THIS. MISS GREY SENT ME.

HMPH...ALL RIGHT. MY SHIFT ENDS AFTER THIS SHOW.

WITH RELIEF IN MY HEART, KNOWING THAT HUMANITY HAD BEEN SAVED FROM THE TERRORS OF GIANT ANTS, I WENT TO SEE DINAH.

YOU MUST THINK I'M SOME KIND OF MONSTER FOR NOT REPORTING KAYLIE'S KIDNAPPING. BUT, BELIEVE ME, I HAVE GOOD REASON NOT TO CALL ON WHITE "JUSTICE."

UH...I'M PRETTY SURE JUSTICE IS SUPPOSED TO BE BLIND. SHE CAN'T DISTINGUISH COLORS.

WELL, IN THIS DAMNED NEIGHBOR-HOOD, SHE SEES *REAL* WELL. LIKE A GODDAMNED PREDATOR.

12

YOU COME FROM THE BIG CITY, AND THAT'S WHY YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND. HERE, THERE ARE THOSE WHO GET SCREWED AND THE ONES WHO DO THE SCREWING. THERE'S AN UNSPOKEN WAR GOING ON, AND THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING, COLORED PEOPLE ARE BOUND TO LOSE.

BUT WE'VE GOT TO BE PATIENT. AS THEY SAY, VENGEANCE IS A DISH BEST SERVED COLD.

LISTEN, I KNOW THAT SONUVABITCH KARUP. I WAS A MAID AT HIS HOUSE, AND JUST THINKING OF THE WAY HE USED TO LOOK AT KAYLIE MAKES MY BLOOD RUN COLD.

AND THERE ARE RUMORS ABOUT HIM...HE'S DANGEROUS.

SO THANKS FOR THE ADVICE, BUT NO. I DON'T THINK I'LL BE GOING TO THE POLICE.

THAT DOESN'T JUSTIFY YOU DOING NOTHING TO FIND KAYLIE...

AND YOU THINK THAT I'M NOT SUFFERING?! THAT I'M HERE WITHOUT A CARE WHILE MY BABY COULD BE DEAD-- OR WORSE, IN THE HANDS OF SOME... OF SOME...

...PERVERT?!

LIKE OLD MAN OLDSMILL'S SON? IT'S BEEN SAID THAT YOU TWO HAD A FLING...

WHACK!!

WHAT KIND OF ILL-MINDED SON OF A BITCH...

...CAN GO AROUND TALKING SHIT LIKE THAT?!

"SON OF A BITCH"?

THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID. ARE YOU SURE YOUR "SOURCES" ARE RELIABLE?

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE LATEST DIRTY DEED COURTESY THE ARCTICS? THEY TOOK A BLACK SHEEP, SHAVED IT BALD, AND THEN ROASTED IT ALIVE. THIS IS TURNING INTO--

--A REAL SLAUGHTER.

HEY! YOU PUNKS AREN'T ALLOWED IN...

YOU SHUT UP!

TROMP!

E-E-E-EEEH!

SAVAGE CRIME

OH-OH-OH-OH!

AAAAA!!

SPECIAL!!

O-OWWW...

YOU'RE A REPORTER, RIGHT?

GOOD-- YOU'RE GOING TO DO US A FAVOR.

RUN THIS IN THE PAPER. WE WANT THOSE WHITE BASTARDS TO KNOW THAT WE DON'T GO AROUND KIDNAPPING KIDS. IF THEY WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HER, LET THEM ASK THAT KARUP PRICK.

I'M SURE HE'S COVERING UP FOR OLDSMILL AND THAT RETARDED SON OF HIS AGAIN.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR SNOUT, BROTHER?

15

NOTHING, IN FACT. HOW 'BOUT YOUR BRAIN?

YOU GIVE ME SO MUCH AS A FRECKLE AND I'LL END YOU.

OKAY, TOUGH GUY. YOU MAKE SURE YOUR FRIEND DOES WHAT HE'S TOLD, OR ELSE...

FOR CERTAIN, PEOPLE IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD DIDN'T SEEM TO LIKE MY FACE. BUT I WAS GOING TO KEEP SHOWING IT AROUND. AT LEAST UNTIL I FOUND THE GIRL.

16

YOU WOULDN'T HAVE SHOT HIM, WOULD YOU?

NO, OF COURSE NOT... YOU'RE NOT LIKE THAT!

AND YOU? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO PUBLISH THAT CRAP, ARE YOU?

OF COURSE I AM! LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE: I'VE ONLY BEEN HERE TWO DAYS AND I'VE ALREADY FINISHED A ONE-WEEK JOB. I AM ONCE AGAIN GOING TO BE THE STAR REPORTER OF *WHAT'S NEWS*.

BY THE WAY, YOU KNOW WHY THEY CALL ME "WEEKLY" BACK AT THE PAPER?

I HAVE NO IDEA.

BECAUSE THEY ONLY SEE ME ONCE A WEEK, WHEN I BRING IN MY STORY. FOR THEM, I'M KINDA LIKE A MYTH.

WELL, "MR. MYTH," I WANT TO FIND OUT HOW DEEP IN THIS CRAP KARUP REALLY IS. SO FIND YOURSELF A DISCREET SPOT AND PAY ATTENTION TO EVERYTHING THAT GOES ON IN HIS HOUSE.

DON'T WORRY. I WON'T MISS A THING.

TAP TAP

17

"KINDA LIKE A MYTH"... HA HA...

E.V. OLDSMILL SPORT CLUB
PRIVATE AREA

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, MISTER?

TWHAP!

POC

MR. OLDSMILL, I'LL GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT. I SUPPOSE YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LITTLE KAYLIE.

RIGHT. AND--?

WELL, I'VE BEEN HIRED TO FIND HER...

...AND ALL I'VE BEEN HEARING IS THAT YOUR SON IS MIXED UP IN ALL OF THIS.

TWHAP

POC!

OF COURSE...AND I BET YOU WERE ALSO TOLD THAT KARUP IS TRYING TO COVER UP THE INCIDENT, TO KEEP FROM DRAGGING MY GOOD FAMILY NAME THROUGH THE MUD... A LOAD OF HORSESHIT!

TAKE A GOOD LOOK FOR YOURSELF. WHO WOULD WANT TO SLEEP WITH THAT REJECT?

18

FRANKLY, I BELIEVE THIS AFFAIR IS GETTING WELL OUT OF OUR GOOD CHIEF'S HANDS. I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF THE BRAT TURNED OUT TO BE HIS OWN KID...HE HAS, AFTER ALL, ALREADY BEEN MARRIED TO A BLACK. BUT, THEN AGAIN, ANYONE CAN MAKE A MISTAKE.

I'LL TELL YOU ONE THING, BOY. I FIND IT QUITE DISTASTEFUL THAT SOMEONE IN A POSITION LIKE KARUP'S COULD BE MIXED UP WITH A LOWLIFE LIKE THAT DINAH.

AND WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT A "LOWLIFE"?

POF

LET'S JUST SAY THAT THEY SOIL EVERYTHING. BEFORE THEY ARRIVED, THIS PLACE WAS A MODEL NEIGHBORHOOD, AND NOW LOOK AT IT: UNEMPLOYMENT AND MISERY FOR EVERYONE.

POC POC

NOT FOR EVERYONE, SIR-- SOME STILL LIVE PRETTY WELL. BUT IT'S A SHAME NONE OF YOUR FURTHER DESCENDANTS WILL BE ABLE TO ENJOY SUCH A RICH HERITAGE. IT'S THE DOWNSIDE OF INMARRIAGE.

SOMETIMES MIXING ISN'T SUCH A BAD IDEA AFTER ALL.

TWHAPP!

POC!

19

GOODBYE, MR. OLDSMILL.

YUCK! IT'S COLD! DAMN WINTER!

U.S. MAIL

TOC TOC

?

WHAT THE HECK'S THIS JOKER DOING HERE?

20

I LOVE THIS JOB!

...BUT THAT'S NOT ALL.

AFTER LOVER-BOY LEFT, I FOLLOWED HER TO THIS RESTAURANT. AND GUESS WHO OUR UNFAITHFUL WIFE WAS MEETING!

THE VERY MOTHER OF THE MISSING GIRL!

I SAT DOWN TO EAT IN THE BOOTH NEXT TO THEIRS. AND TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, DINAH LOOKED REALLY NERVOUS.

WHAT DID YOU HEAR?

ONLY PIECES. BUT I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT DINAH WAS THREATENING HER. AS IF SHE WAS GOING TO SPILL HER GUTS ABOUT SOMETHING.

SOMETHING? LIKE WHAT?

I COULDN'T GET SPECIFICS, BUT I HEARD HER SAY:

SHE'S MY DAUGHTER. I WON'T LET HER SUFFER...

HMM. IT SEEMS THAT THE CHIEF DOES KNOW WHERE THE GIRL IS.

IT "SEEMS"? THE GUY'S GOT "PERVERT" WRITTEN ALL OVER HIS FACE. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT KARUP IS GONNA BE HEADLINING THE FRONT PAGE OF *WHAT'S NEWS* ON HIS OWN MERITS.

WE'LL SEE WHAT HIS FELLOW CITIZENS THINK WHEN THEY FIND OUT THAT THE CHIEF LIKES TO PLAY "DOCTOR."

OLD MAN OLDSMILL WAS WAY TOO CYNICAL AND TOO RICH TO BOTHER WITH LYING.

HE HAD GIVEN ME REASON TO BELIEVE THAT KARUP COULD BE KAYLIE'S FATHER, WHICH WOULD MAKE HIM THE MAIN SUSPECT IN HER DISAPPEARANCE.

I DROVE TO DINAH'S HOUSE DETERMINED TO MAKE HER TELL ME WHAT SHE'D HELD BACK EARLIER. SOMETHING IN THAT STORY WAS BUGGING ME. EITHER SHE WAS BEING BLACKMAILED OR SHE WAS THE BLACKMAILER.

A DETAIL MADE ME SUSPECT THAT SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT: SOMEONE HAD SWEPT THE SNOW, SURELY IN ORDER TO ERASE THEIR FOOTPRINTS...

THEN THE FRONT DOOR WAS OPEN.

KAYLIE WOULD NEVER SEE HER MOTHER AGAIN. SOMEONE HAD ENSURED THAT THEY WOULD STAY APART FOREVER.

DINAH'S BODY, SO BEAUTIFUL AND FULL OF LIFE A FEW HOURS AGO, NOW LAY TWISTED AND COLD. JUDGING BY HER WOUNDS, SHE HAD BEEN STABBED BY SOME LONG-EDGED WEAPON--MAYBE A MACHETE...

...PERHAPS A SABER.

22

I HAD NO SOLID PROOF THAT COULD POINT DIRECTLY TO KARUP...

...BUT EXPERIENCE HAD TAUGHT ME HOW TO PLAY MY CARDS RIGHT.

WHAT WOULD YOUR BELOVED GENERAL LEE THINK OF THE WAY YOU USE HIS SWORD?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT. NOW IF YOU DON'T MIND, YOU'RE IN MY WAY.

LISTEN, KARUP, YOU'D BETTER HAVE A DAMN GOOD ALIBI, BECAUSE I'M ON TO YOU. AND I HOPE FOR YOUR SAKE THAT NOTHING HAS HAPPENED TO THE GIRL. I HAVE TO SAY, FOR A POLICE CHIEF, YOU SURE ARE SLOP--

YOU LEAVE MY HUSBAND ALONE! HE'S A MAN OF LAW! IF THERE'S ONE GOOD, HONEST MAN LEFT HERE IN THE LINE, IT'S HANS KARUP--

JEZABEL...

--AND I WON'T ALLOW A THUG LIKE YOU TO INSULT HIM IN SUCH A MANNER.

23

IS THIS SACK OF SHIT BOTHERING YOU?

WELL, IF IT ISN'T ROMEO! AND WHOM EXACTLY ARE YOU DEFENDING? YOUR CHIEF, OR HIS ATTRACTIVE AND WELCOMING WIFE?

WHAP!

AND HOW ABOUT THE REST OF YOU? ARE YOU SURE THAT CHIEF KARUP IS THE BEST PERSON TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN THE CHOIR?

LOOK, YOU PIECE OF FILTH. YOU'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE IF YOU DON'T WANT THIS TO END BADLY. YOU'RE STARTING TO CLASH WITH THE WHITE LANDSCAPE.

HUK, COME PICK ME UP AFTER CHOIR REHEARSAL.

FOREVER AND EEEVER... A-AAAAMENN...

I'LL SEE YOU NEXT SUNDAY, KIDS. BE CAREFUL.

GOODBYE, MR. KARUP.

HERE YOU GO, CUTIE-PIE. THIS IS FOR YOU.

A-HEM!

?

NOW GO ON.

SMACK!

WHAT'S NEWS SUBURBAN SCANDAL

HAVE YOU SEEN WHAT THAT DAMNED FERRET WROTE?

YES. THE TRUCE IS OVER. I'M NOT GOING TO LET ANYONE SPREAD SUCH LIBEL ABOUT ME AND GET AWAY WITH IT, AND CERTAINLY NOT TRASH LIKE HIM.

RRRIIP!

GATHER UP THE BOYS AT OUR USUAL PLACE. HERE, TAKE MY CAR. WE'RE GOING TO STRAIGHTEN THINGS OUT WITH THIS TROUBLEMAKER AND HIS WHITE-MUZZLED FRIEND.

SPEAKING OF THE CAT, YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE A WORD HE SAID, DID--

25

--YOU...?

CLAC

THOOM!

HANS, YOU CAN'T SERIOUSLY THINK THAT I WOULD...

THUD!

AOUGHHH!

GGGGGG...

BA-DA-

AARGHH!!

BLAM!

CHIEF, I KNOW YOU'RE A LITTLE ON EDGE, BUT DON'T LOSE IT NOW. THAT BITCH DINAH DESERVED TO DIE...BUT THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS TO DO IT, QUIETER--

I HAVEN'T KILLED ANYONE... YET.

THE LINE'S TRAIN STATION WAS A LOYAL REFLECTION OF ITS NEIGHBORHOOD. AN IMAGE OF WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN, BUT NEVER WAS. TEN YEARS AGO, THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SITE HAD STOPPED, LEAVING IT HALF BUILT. ALONG WITH THE FACTORIES SHUTTERED FROM THE CRISIS, IT PLAYED ITS PART IN THE GHOSTLY SCENERY OF THIS SUBURB.

WEEKLY HAD DISAPPEARED, AND DON'T ASK ME WHY, BUT DESPITE EVERYTHING I KIND OF MISSED HIS "FINE AROMA."

SO I DECIDED TO FOLLOW THE MAGPIE, WHO I FIGURED WAS A LOT LESS INNOCENT THAN HE APPEARED TO BE.

BUDDIE

HOW MUCH WILL YOU GIVE ME FOR THIS?

WHERE'S THE OWNER OF THAT CAMERA?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, MISTER...

I'M TALKING ABOUT MY FRIEND, THE REPORTER. I'M THINKING HE'S BEEN KIDNAPPED AND YOU MIGHT KNOW WHERE HE IS.

I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. THEY NEVER TELL ME ANYTHING.

"THEY"?

AND WHAT'S YOUR ROLE IN ALL THIS? YOU'VE BEEN FOLLOWING ME SINCE THE DAY I SET FOOT IN THIS STINKING PLACE. YOU'RE A GODDAMN BIRD OF ILL OMEN.

I'M JUST A POOR DEVIL WHO ONLY WANTS TO LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO GET TO LAS VEGAS...

YOU LIKE TO GAMBLE, HUH? OKAY, OLD MAN, LET'S PLAY A LITTLE GAME: I ASK QUESTIONS AND YOU ANSWER!

WHERE ARE "THEY" HIDING MY FRIEND? ***ANSWER ME!***

OKAY! I'LL TAKE YOU TO HIM! JUST DON'T KILL ME, I BEG YOU!

LET'S GO. TIME IS RUNNING OUT.

28

TELL ME THAT THERE'S NOTHING BETWEEN YOU AND HUK.

I'M SURPRISED YOU EVEN PAID ATTENTION TO THAT OAF. YOU KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE THAT I'D NEVER LET ANY MAN TOUCH ME. IT DISGUSTS ME FAR TOO MUCH!

GOD, JEZ! IT'S UNBEARABLE TO THINK THAT SOMEONE ELSE IS ENJOYING WHAT I'VE BEEN DENIED FOR SO LONG...

OH, CALM DOWN, HANS! YOU KNEW EXACTLY WHAT WAS IN STORE FOR YOU WHEN WE ARRANGED THIS MARRIAGE. ANYWAY, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE FOUND SOMETHING TO CONSOLE YOU, HAVEN'T YOU?

I MEAN, THOSE CHOIR KIDS TO WHOM YOU ARE SO DEVOTED--

--OH!

DON'T YOU DARE SAY THAT AGAIN! YOU KNOW THAT'S A FILTHY LIE!

WHAT WOULD YOU DO--MAKE A SCENE BY THROWING ME OUT OF THE HOUSE, LIKE YOU DID WITH YOUR FIRST WIFE? NO. UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU, I'M NOT SOME POOR BLACK GIRL LIKE SHE WAS.

AND YOU NEED ME TO KEEP UP YOUR IMAGE OF THE PERFECT W.A.S.P., HONEST MAN, AND GOOD HUSBAND. DON'T YOU REMEMBER WHY WE GOT MARRIED?

DAMN YOU! GET OUT OF MY SIGHT!

WITH PLEASURE!

SLAM!

BISHOP, GRAB THE ROPES THAT ARE IN THE TRUNK.

30

I KNOW THIS PLACE LIKE THE PALM OF MY HAND. I USED TO WORK HERE WHEN IT WAS THE BIGGEST PLANE FACTORY IN THE COUNTRY. I COULD MOVE THROUGH IT WITH MY EYES CLOSED! HA HA!

OLDSMOL AIRCRAFT INDUSTRIES
NO TRESPASSING

IT WAS THE ONLY THING I COULD DO TO SERVE MY COUNTRY. I COULDN'T JOIN COMBAT DUE TO BEING BLIND AND ALL.

AND I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED NEVER TO HAVE SEEN WHAT I SAW OVER THERE.

WHERE WERE YOU POSTED? IN EUROPE? I WOULD'VE LIKED TO BE A PILOT.

IRONIC, ISN'T IT? A BIRD WHO CAN'T FLY.

TROMP!

IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME VERMIN LIKE YOU HAVE LED ME INTO A TRAP, YOU KNOW, COTTEN--

--COTTEN?

31

WE WERE WAITING FOR YOU.

LET'S BEGIN, THEN.

OF COURSE...

BOYS... GO AHEAD!

HEY--!

HAVE YOU ALL GONE MAD?! LET GO OF ME! I SAID LET GO OF ME!

32

YOU'RE ALL GOING TO PAY FOR THIS! HUK! TELL THEM TO LET ME GO!

ALL RIGHT.

AAAA!

BUT ONLY IF YOU CAN EXPLAIN WHY BISHOP FOUND THESE CLOTHES IN THE TRUNK OF YOUR CAR.

THE FAMILIAR BUT NONETHELESS THREATENING VOICE RICOCHETED OFF THE WALLS OF THE FACTORY AND INTO MY EARS.

THE COSTUME BALL HAD ALREADY BEGUN, AND I'D DECIDED TO CRASH THE PARTY.

TODAY IS A GRAND DAY FOR OUR ORGANIZATION!

33

NOT ONLY WILL WE FREE OURSELVES OF A ROTTEN ACCOMPLICE OF THE CLAWS, BUT WE'RE ALSO GOING TO WASH OUT A VILE STAIN THAT WAS TARNISHING OUR DIVINE MISSION!

YOU'VE ALL GONE CRAZY! DON'T BELIEVE A WORD HE SAYS! HE'S THE DEVIL HIMSELF!

THE PERSON WE BELIEVED UNTOUCHABLE HAS TURNED OUT TO BE A MONSTROUS TRAITOR TO OUR RACE AND CAUSE!

HE HAS BETRAYED SACRED VALUES THAT NO GOOD CHRISTIAN SHOULD EVER DISREGARD. HE HAS MURDERED THAT LITTLE BLACK GIRL. AND GOD ONLY KNOWS WHAT OTHER ATROCITIES HE'S COMMITTED WITH OUR CHILDREN, BETRAYING OUR BLIND TRUST AND TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS PRIVILEGED POSITION!

FINISH HIM OFF!

YOU SICK PERVERT!

HANG HIM!

I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING! THIS IS A SETUP! I'M BEING FRAMED! I'M INNOCENT!

INNOCENT!!

34

DON'T WORRY, CHIEF. I'LL TAKE CARE OF JEZABEL WHEN YOU'RE GONE.

GO TO HELL!!

CLANG!

35

LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.

YOUR TIME HAS COME, YOU MISCREANT!

OH MY GOD...

WITH THIS AS AN EXAMPLE, THOSE VERMIN AND THEIR ACCOMPLICES...

LISTEN TO ME...

?

...I WANT YOU TO JUMP AS FAR AS YOU CAN WHEN I TELL YOU TO.

K-RRRAASH!

NOW!

WHAT?!

36

RAAAH!

BANG! BANG! B

AAAAAH!

BLAM

BL
BLAM

R-RRIIPP!

CRASH!

DZIIINNNGG

GET HIM!!

37

A FIRE! THE FACTORY'S BURNING, RIGHT?!

LET GO OF ME, YOU STUPID OLD MAN! I'VE GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE!

BUT YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE THE GIRL! WE'VE GOT TO GET HER OUT OF HERE BEFORE THE FIRE SPREADS!

DO WHATEVER YOU LIKE! IT'S YOUR PROBLEM NOW!

YOURS TOO IF THE OTHERS FIND OUT YOU'RE THE ONE BEHIND HER KIDNAPPING.

HMM...YOU'RE RIGHT.

BUT DON'T WORRY. I THINK I'VE FOUND A SOLUTION.

BANG!

38

BLAMM!

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

FOR GOD'S SAKE, DON'T SHOOT! IT'S ME!

WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUR WAY OUT. THIS PLACE IS A MOUSETRAP.

OH MY GOD...

:KOFF, KOFF!:

39

IT'S NOTHING. I'M ALL RIGHT. LET'S GET TO MY NEST.

WE'VE GOTTA GET THE LITTLE GIRL OUT OF HERE.

:SOB... SNIFF!:

KAYLIE?

EASY, KID. WE'RE GOING HOME.

40

BLACKSAD! YOU STILL HERE?

YES, COTTEN.

TELL ME--HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO A CASINO? IT MUST BE BEAUTIFUL...ALL THOSE LIGHTS...THE SOUND OF MONEY FLOWING LIKE A WATERFALL... :KOFF, KOFF!: THE FOX PROMISED HE'D TAKE ME IF I HELPED OUT. BUT I'M AFRAID HE ISN'T A MAN OF HIS WORD, IS HE?

COTTEN, I'D HEARD THAT BIRDS OF YOUR KIND GO CRAZY OVER THINGS THAT SHINE, BUT YOUR CASE IS DOWNRIGHT PATHOLOGICAL...

I'VE BROUGHT YOU TO THE GIRL, SO NOW YOU'VE GOT TO PROMISE ME SOMETHING. PROMISE ME YOU'LL TAKE ME TO LAS VEGAS...

ALL RIGHT, FAIR ENOUGH. WE'LL GO TO THAT DAMN DESERT.

HURRY! WE'VE GOT TO TAKE OFF IF WE DON'T WANNA FRY!!

41

THE LINE'S POLICE DIDN'T REALLY LOOK INTO THE CASE. THEY ATTRIBUTED BOTH THE KIDNAPPING AND THE MURDER TO KARUP, CALLING HIM A LOST SHEEP WHO HAD STRAYED FROM THE HERD.

EAST Coast GASOLINE

NO SMOKING STOP MOTOR

CARS WASHED 1$ 50

WE SERVE WHITE PEOPLE ONLY

AIR

A LOCAL PAPER, SYMPATHETIC TO ARCTIC IDEALS, EVEN PRESENTED THE FACTORY INCIDENT AS A BRILLIANT EXAMPLE OF HOW JUSTICE SHOULD BE DONE.

BUT I WASN'T PLANNING TO LET THE FOX GET OFF SO EASILY.

42

CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, BUT I DON'T RECALL "SCREWING THY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE" AND "LYNCHING THY NEIGHBOR BEFORE A BURNING CROSS" BEING MENTIONED IN ***THE GUIDE TO GOOD CHRISTIAN LIVING***...

THOUGH I'VE GOTTA CONGRATULATE MRS. KARUP. THE TWO OF YOU REALLY DID HATCH A PERFECT SETUP TO GET RID OF THE POOR CUCKOLD.

WHAT'S WRONG? CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, KARUP HAD GOTTEN HIS REVENGE FROM THE GRAVE IN THE WAY HE PREFERRED: "AN EYE FOR AN EYE."

SOUTHERN TREES...
BEAR A STRANGE FRUIT...
BLOOD ON THE LEAVES...
AND BLOOD AT THE ROOT...
BLACK BODIES SWINGING...
IN THE SOUTHERN BREEZE...
STRANGE FRUIT HANGING...
FROM THE POPLAR TREES...

43

PASTORAL SCENE OF THE GALLANT SOUTH...
THE BULGING EYES AND THE TWISTED MOUTH...
SCENT OF MAGNOLIA, SWEET AND FRESH...
THEN THE SUDDEN SMELL OF
BURNING FLESH...

HERE IS A FRUIT FOR THE CROWS TO PLUCK...

FOR THE RAIN TO GATHER...FOR THE WIND TO SUCK...

FOR THE SUN TO ROT...
FOR THE TREE TO DROP...

HERE IS A STRANGE...

...AND BITTER...

...CROP...*

DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE FOUND YOURSELF A GIRLFRIEND HERE IN THE LINE!

44

* "STRANGE FRUIT," WRITTEN BY ABEL MEEROPOL IN 1936.

WHERE YA GOIN', ALL DRESSED UP LIKE THAT?

TO A FUNERAL.

WELL, THAT SHOULD BE FUN...LUCKY FOR YOU YOUR GOOD FRIEND WEEK IS HERE FULL OF GOOD VIBES.

I'VE FINALLY BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP THE PICTURES. MAN, I'M TELLING YOU, THEY ARE WORKS OF PURE ART!

WANNA SEE THE MERRY WIDOW IN ACTION?

I'M AFRAID I WON'T BE SHOCKED--

WEEKLY, CALL YOUR PAPER AND TELL THEM TO DIG UP ALL THEY CAN ON KARUP'S FIRST WIFE.

DEAR HUSBAND...

...THERE WERE VERY FEW FORTUNATE ONES WHO EVER TRULY GOT TO KNOW YOU.

TODAY WE MOURN AND WEEP OVER YOUR DEATH, BUT WE WILL NEITHER FORGIVE NOR FORGET.

VENGEANCE IS A DISH BEST SERVED COLD.

46

?

RIP
Dinah
Smith
1929-1985

THAT WAS A VERY INSTRUCTIVE SPEECH, MRS. KARUP.

PLEASE RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE'S SUFFERING.

OH!!

R-RRIP!

47

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FATHER.

MOM LOVED HIM VERY MUCH. THAT'S WHAT MADE HIS ACTIONS ALL THE MORE CRUEL.

"SHE USED TO SAY THAT KARUP WAS THE BEST PERSON SHE HAD EVER MET. BUT THAT WAS BEFORE ALL THAT RACE CRAP STARTED CORRUPTING HIS MIND.

"LIKE SO MANY OTHER NEWLYWEDS, THEY MOVED TO THE LINE LOOKING FOR A PROSPERITY THAT NEVER CAME. HE STARTED TO COZY UP TO THE 'CIRCLES OF POWER' OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD HOPING TO GAIN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASCENSION.

IMPORTED GOODS

48

"LITTLE BY LITTLE, LOVE TURNED INTO IGNORANCE, IGNORANCE INTO HATE. HE STARTED HITTING HER JUST BECAUSE SHE WAS BLACK.

"THE LAST STRAW FOR HIM WAS WHEN SHE GOT PREGNANT. TO HAVE A MIXED-RACE DESCENDANT WAS UNACCEPTABLE FOR ANYBODY WHO WANTED TO BE SOMEBODY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

"SHE WAS SEVEN MONTHS PREGNANT WHEN HE WOKE HER IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT DURING A SNOWSTORM, TOOK HER DEEP INTO THE WOODS, AND ABANDONED HER THERE, HOPING SHE WOULD SOON DIE. NO ONE DID ANYTHING TO STOP HIM, NOR ASKED ANY QUESTIONS. HIS NEW FRIENDS KEPT THE SECRET."

BUT SHE DIDN'T DIE, DID SHE?

NOT RIGHT AWAY. SHE LIVED LONG ENOUGH TO BRING US INTO THIS WORLD-- DINAH AND ME-- THOUGH SHE WAS NEVER THE SAME AFTERWARDS.

"SHE NEVER RETURNED TO THE LINE, WEIGHED DOWN UNDER THE BURDEN OF BEING A BLACK SINGLE MOTHER. SHE DID ALL SHE COULD TO FORGET AND SURVIVE, BUT ONE DAY HER FRAGILE CONDITION JUST GAVE IN."

49

SO YOU BOTH GREW UP OBSESSED WITH GETTING REVENGE ON YOUR MOTHER'S MURDERER--YOUR OWN FATHER.

EXACTLY. THANKS TO MY LOOKS, IT WASN'T HARD TO PASS FOR A SOPHISTICATED "LADY FROM THE SOUTH."

"I ENTERED THE WHITE SOCIETY OF THE LINE THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR, DETERMINED NOT TO GO UNNOTICED. AND I GOT KARUP TO NOTICE ME."

AND YOU EVEN COMMITTED THE INSANITY OF MARRYING HIM.

YES. THAT WAY I COULD KEEP A CLOSER EYE ON HIM AND KNOW EXACTLY WHAT MADE HIM VULNERABLE. BESIDES, I ENJOYED WATCHING HIM SUFFER THE TORTURE OF NOT BEING ABLE TO LAY A HAND ON ME.

"I THEN CONVINCED HIM TO HIRE DINAH AS A MAID. OUR PLAN WAS STARTING TO TAKE FORM.

"AND THAT'S WHERE HUK CAME IN ...

"I SEDUCED HIM, PLAYING THE POOR WHITE WIFE WHOSE HUSBAND PREFERRED TO FOOL AROUND WITH THE BLACK MAID. HE ALREADY HAD ISSUES WITH THE CHIEF, SO MANIPULATING HIM WAS EASY.

50

"WE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE RUMORS GOING AROUND THAT HANS HAD A THING FOR CHILDREN AND PLANNED THE FAKE KIDNAPPING. THE IDEA HAD COME FROM THE FOX HIMSELF."

AND DINAH? WHY DID SHE HAVE TO DIE?

"POOR DINAH! SHE WAS NEVER AS STRONG AS I. THE DRASTIC MEASURES OF OUR PLAN SCARED HER. HUK KILLED HER TO MAKE SURE SHE KEPT HER MOUTH SHUT. HE WOULDN'T HAVE GONE SO FAR IF HE HAD KNOWN SHE WAS MY SISTER. DINAH DIDN'T DESERVE TO DIE LIKE THAT.

"SO I DECIDED TO GO TELL THE FOX THAT WE WERE THROUGH..."

IT'S ALL OVER NOW. MY MOTHER AND SISTER CAN REST IN PEACE.

AND WHAT ABOUT KAYLIE? DID SHE DESERVE ALL THIS?

51

I'M COLD.

THE SUN IS FINALLY OUT. ON DAYS LIKE THESE, YOU COULD ALMOST BELIEVE THAT EVERY PROBLEM HAS A SOLUTION.

52

I'M SURE OF IT. DON'T EVER GIVE UP, MISS GREY. WE NEED PEOPLE LIKE YOU TO MAKE SURE OUR CHILDREN CAN GROW UP WITHOUT PREJUDICE OR HATE. MAYBE THAT WAY, THIS NEIGHBORHOOD WILL SOMEDAY BECOME WHAT ITS FIRST CITIZENS DREAMED OF.

GOODBYE, MR. BLACKSAD.

OUCH!

POF!

MFFF! GRMMF!

53

EASY, WEEK. I CAN SEE YOU LIKE SNOW JUST ABOUT AS MUCH AS WATER.

I THINK I OWE YOU BIG TIME FOR SAVING MY LIFE AND ALL, SO I'M GONNA TELL YOU A SECRET.

CLICK VRROM

SHOOT.

WELL... THE TRUE REASON FOR MY NICKNAME IS, UH...THE BOYS BACK AT THE RAG CLAIM I CHANGE MY UNDERWEAR ONLY ONCE A WEEK... I'M NOT KNOWN FOR BEING VERY CLEAN ...

HA HA HA HA!!

WHY THANK YOU, MY FRIEND! YOU'VE JUST BRIGHTENED MY DAY!

END OF EPISODE

JUANJO GUARNIDO & JUAN DÍAZ CANALES
2003

FOOD
BEVERAG

RED SOUL

Written by

JUAN DIAZ CANALES

Art by

JUANJO GUARNIDO

Lettering by

STUDIO CUTIE

Preceding:
The original cover to this album as published by Dargaud, November 2005

TO HAVE GOOD OR BAD LUCK...CAN ANYONE EXPLAIN JUST WHAT THAT MEANS? I CAN'T.

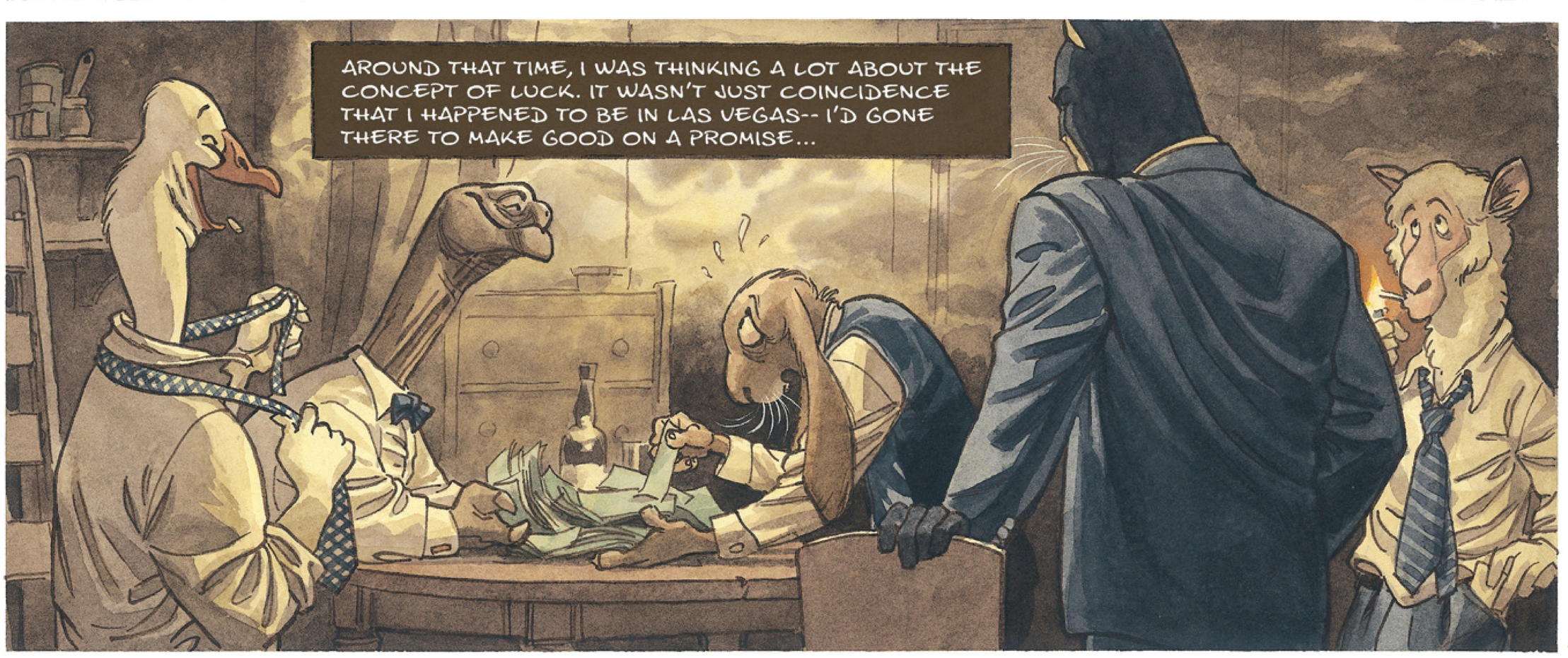
MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, SIMPLE LUCK DOESN'T CUT IT.

SOMETIMES YOU'VE ALSO GOT TO HAVE GOOD RUNNING LEGS.

1

BUT FOR THE RIGHT PRICE...

...YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON A REAL GOON TO GET YOU OUT OF A BIND.


AROUND THAT TIME, I WAS THINKING A LOT ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF LUCK. IT WASN'T JUST COINCIDENCE THAT I HAPPENED TO BE IN LAS VEGAS-- I'D GONE THERE TO MAKE GOOD ON A PROMISE...

2

THEN I'D HIT A ROUGH PATCH, LINING UP DOUBTS AND DEBTS, AND SMARTING FROM A STRING OF BADLY PAID GIGS. MY SELF-RESPECT AND BANK ACCOUNT WERE SLUGGING IT OUT TO SEE WHICH COULD HIT ROCK BOTTOM FIRST.

SO WHEN HEWITT MANDELINE OFFERED ME A JOB AS BODYGUARD AND COLLECTOR, I DIDN'T REALLY HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE.

TO KEEP YOUR HEAD ABOVE WATER YOU NEED MONEY, AND THE LOSER ALWAYS PAYS. IT'S THE RULE OF THE GAME.

MOST GUYS WOULD FIGURE I GOT LUCKY, FINDING A JOB THAT PAID BIG. NOT ME.

ONE OF HEWITT'S LAST WHIMS BROUGHT ME HOME.

MY ASSIGNMENT WAS TO ESCORT HIM TO AN ART GALLERY WHERE HE INTENDED TO BUY SOME PAINTINGS, INVESTING THE MONEY HE'D WON IN VEGAS.

IT'S ONLY ON OUR DEATHBEDS THAT WE REALLY FIGURE OUT IF WE'VE BEEN LUCKY IN LIFE, AND BY THEN IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE.

4

...AND THIS PIECE HERE IS PART OF THE "SOUL OF THE WORLD" SERIES, PAINTED BY SERGEI LITVAK, WHICH WILL SOON BE SHOWING IN AN EXHIBIT IN EAST BERLIN THANKS TO THE GOTFIELD FOUNDATION...

GOOD GOD, IT'S HUGE! IS IT PRICED BY THE POUND?

HUMPH!

BLACKSAD--!

YOU'RE THE LAST PERSON I'D EXPECT TO MEET IN A PLACE LIKE THIS!

DOESN'T SEEM A LIKELY PLACE FOR A COP EITHER... I MEAN, A COMMISSIONER.

IT'S NOT EXACTLY WHERE I'D SPEND MY DAY OFF, THAT'S FOR SURE. BUT MY WIFE LIKES ALL THIS FANCY SH-- UH... THIS CR...

5

WELL, YOU KNOW. SHE SAYS IT'S GOOD FOR THE KIDS. IT'S PART OF WHAT WE DO FOR THEM, THOUGH OF COURSE YOU CAN'T REALLY SYMPATHIZE WITH THAT.

AND WHY NOT? ALL IT TAKES IS A BIT OF SENSITIVITY. I'M DOROTHY.

JOHN BLACKSAD. IT'S A PLEASURE, MA'AM.

THANK HEAVENS, I SEE THAT NOT ALL OF MY HUSBAND'S FRIENDS ARE AS IGNORANT AS HE IS. WOULD YOU CARE TO HAVE DINNER WITH US? YOU COULD BRING YOUR FRIEND, IF YOU LIKE.

I CAN'T TONIGHT. MAYBE SOME OTHER TIME. THANKS, THOUGH.

THAT'S A SHAME. SOON, THEN.

YOU ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES. I HAD TO FIND SOMETHING GOOD FOR TONIGHT...

6

...A DISTRACTION THAT WOULD HELP CLEAR MY HEAD.

GOTFIELD ARTS & CULTURE FOUNDATION

SAMUEL GOTFIELD ENTERPRISES

GOTFIELD FOUNDATION

SAMUEL J. GOTFIELD ARTS & CULTURE SUPPORT NOW presents

AN ENERGY FOR PEACE

a lecture by Otto Liebber

CONFEREN APRIL 6 - 19

HALL :00 P.M.

LIKE A LECTURE ON NUCLEAR ENERGY.

Hopper's ART GALLER

GOOD GOD, THEY MUST'VE REALLY THOUGHT I WAS AN IDIOT! DO YOU KNOW THE ASKING PRICE FOR ONE OF THOSE DOODLES? THE PRINT ON MY SOFA WAS DONE WITH MORE TASTE, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE!

WELL, HOW'D YOU LIKE TO COME TO WILDCATS WITH ME TONIGHT? NOW THAT'S A GOOD INVESTMENT!

THANKS, HEWITT, BUT I HAVE TO MEET UP WITH AN OLD FRIEND.

PEACE

Otto Liebber

"WE LIVE IN AN IMPORTANT TIME, A TIME OF GREAT WORDS...

PEACE

GOTFIELD & CO. = ENEMIES OF AMERICA

"...OF GREAT CONFLICTS...

REDS OUT OF THE USA

REDS OUT

THIS IS COMMUNIST DEMOCRACY

"...AND OF GREAT MEN. MEN LIKE OTTO LIEBBER."

STALIN IS NOT MY FRIEND

COMMUNISTS ARE A MENACE

REDS OUT OF THE USA

REDS OUT

THIS IS COMMUNIST DEMOCRACY

NO REDS

FOR PEACE

...I HOPE ALL THIS CHATTER HAS CONVINCED YOU THAT ATOMIC ENERGY IS ACTUALLY SOMETHING GOOD.

IT EVEN HAS ALL THAT ONE HOPES FOR IN A WOMAN: IT'S CLEAN AND INEXHAUSTIBLE.

A LECTURE BY OTTO LIEBBER — AN ENERGY FOR PEACE

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

8

BUT SERIOUSLY FOLKS, THIS ENERGY WILL OPEN THE DOOR TO A BETTER WORLD...

...ESPECIALLY IF YOU'VE GOT A GOOD SHELTER ON THE DAY THE BOMBS START DROPPING.

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

IF YOU BELIEVED WHAT WAS WRITTEN IN THE PRESS, SAMUEL GOTFIELD WAS A LOT OF THINGS...YOUNG, RICH, HANDSOME, FULL OF LIFE, IDLE COMMUNIST...

TV

AFTER A SHOW LIKE THAT, I COULD'VE ADDED ANOTHER LABEL:

ASSHOLE.

9

I'M SORRY, BUT ONLY PEOPLE WITH CLEARANCE ARE ALLOWED TO SPEAK TO THEM.

PRESS

!

CLANG!

OH!

GOTFI FOUNDATION

I SEE. AND WHAT IF I TOLD YOU THAT I'M AN OLD FRIEND OF THE PROFESSOR?

REDS GO AWAY

NICE TRY. HOW ABOUT YOU KEEP ON TRYING... ELSEWHERE.

LISTEN, DOLL, IT'S NOT NICE TO JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER...YOU WOULDN'T LIKE IT IF I THOUGHT YOU WERE A STUCK-UP BOOKWORM, NOW WOULD YOU?

10

I COULDN'T CARE LESS WHAT YOU THINK OF ME. NOW PLEASE LEAVE OR I'LL CALL SECURITY.

SETTLE DOWN, SWEETHEART! LET'S START OVER. AFTER ALL, ***EVERYBODY DESERVES ANOTHER CHANCE.***

THE SMART ALECK!

NOT THAT SMART. I WASN'T EVEN ABLE TO CONVINCE THE LADY TO LET ME THROUGH.

ALMA, HE'S A FRIEND.

MY GOD... YOU'RE ALL GROWN UP NOW...

TAP TAP

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?

WELL, I HAVEN'T CHANGED ALL THAT MUCH. MAIN DIFFERENCE IS, I USED TO RUN FROM THE POLICE AND NOW I RUN AFTER THE BAD GUYS.

WE HAVE TO GO, OTTO. DON'T FORGET YOUR HAT-- YOUR IDEAS MIGHT CATCH COLD.

11

AREN'T YOU GOING TO INTRODUCE ME TO YOUR FRIEND? HE CERTAINLY LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE WHO LEADS A VERY INTERESTING LIFE.

NO, NOT REALLY. BEING A RACECAR DRIVER ISN'T ALWAYS ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE...

CRAASH!

DZING

CLING

BONK!

AARGGH!

THAT'S A GOOD ONE-- RACECAR DRIVER! YOU'LL HAVE TO TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT. COME TO OUR PLACE ON TUESDAY. WE'RE HAVING A LITTLE GET-TOGETHER, AND I'D LOVE IT IF YOU COULD JOIN US.

I'LL SEE YOU SOON, SMART ALECK.

ASSHOLE.

I SAW THE BEST MINDS OF MY GENERATION DESTROYED BY MADNESS, STARVING HYSTERICAL NAKED, DRAGGING THEMSELVES THROUGH THE NEGRO STREETS AT DAWN LOOKING FOR AN ANGRY FIX, ANGEL-HEADED HIPSTERS BURNING FOR THE ANCIENT HEAVENLY CONNECTION TO THE STARRY DYNAMO IN THE MACHINERY OF NIGHT--

12

--WHO POVERTY AND TATTERS AND HOLLOW-EYED AND HIGH SAT UP SMOKING IN THE SUPERNATURAL DARKNESS OF COLD-WATER FLATS FLOATING ACROSS THE TOPS OF CITIES CONTEMPLATING JAZZ...*

I DECIDED TO GO TO THE PARTY, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT SEEING GOTFIELD AGAIN WOULD TURN MY STOMACH SOUR. BUT SEEING LIEBBER MADE ME WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE GOOD OLD TIMES, BACK WHEN HIS FATHER, THE MAN WE SIMPLY CALLED "THE MINISTER," HAD BUILT A CHARITY MISSION TO HELP FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD.

LIEBBER WAS PART OF THE "TWELVE APOSTLES," A GROUP OF LEFTIST INTELLECTUALS WHO WOULD GATHER TOGETHER UNDER THE PROTECTION OF GOTFIELD AND HIS PHILANTHROPY.

THERE YOU COULD FIND GREENBERG HIMSELF, THE CRAZY POET. AND AT HIS FEET, HYPNOTIZED BY HIS POETRY, THE WILLBURG COUPLE-- POETS THEMSELVES-- ALONGSIDE DORA THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND KLEIN THE SCULPTOR.

THE WORST OF THE "WITCH HUNT" WAS STILL TO COME. BILL RATCLIFF THE ACTOR AND JESS LOGAN THE SCREENWRITER CALMLY STUFFED THEIR FACES, WITHOUT A THOUGHT FOR COMMITTEES OR BLACKLISTS. THE REST OF THE GROUP WAS MADE UP OF SERGEI LITVAK, RUSSIAN PAINTER, LASZLO HERZL, RENOWNED CHEMIST...

...AND ALMA MAYER, WRITER.

13

* "HOWL," BY ALLEN GINSBERG, 1956.

SO REALLY, THE ONLY THING THAT EVOKED THE BIBLICAL COMPARISON WAS THAT THERE WERE TWELVE OF THEM...

:'GASP...!:- HELP--!

...AND THAT ONE OF THEM HAD TRIED TO WALK ON WATER.

GLUG! GLARGH!

:'PUFF, PUFF!:- OTERO, YOU OLD QUACK... WHO INVITED YOU TO MY PARTY?

EVIDENTLY HE'S SWALLOWED TOO MUCH LIQUID, AND NOT JUST WATER.

HEY! IT'S MY FRIEND THE RACECAR DRIVER!

HEY, MAN, THIS IS MY OWN PRIVATE BEACH-- I CAN DROWN IF I FEEL LIKE IT! *HA HA HA...*

IF ONLY I'D KNOWN, I WOULD'VE LET YOU.

IT'S THE END, MY FRIENDS!

OTTO, TELL ME YOU'LL HELP ME BUILD A SHELTER FOR THE DAY WHEN IT ALL GOES TO HELL! I MEAN, YOU WORKED AT LOS ALAMOS, DIDN'T YOU?

COME ON, SAMUEL. YOU'VE HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK.

14

BOOM! "AND IN THOSE DAYS SHALL MEN SEEK DEATH, AND SHALL NOT FIND IT-- AND SHALL DESIRE TO DIE, AND DEATH SHALL FLEE FROM THEM...!"*

SO, "AN ENERGY FOR PEACE"...? PROFESSOR, THINGS HAVE REALLY CHANGED. TO GO FROM BEING THE MINISTER'S SON TO ONE OF THE FATHERS OF THE BOMB...

THAT'S OUR GOOD FRIEND LIEBBER-- JUST FULL OF CONTRADICTIONS. A FERVENT PACIFIST...

!

...CAPABLE, NEVERTHELESS, OF PARTICIPATING IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON OF DESTRUCTION OF ALL TIMES: THE H-BOMB!

BUT...

COOL IT, LASZLO!

IF YOU KEEP YELLING LIKE THAT, WE'RE GOING TO THINK-- THANK YOU, SON-- THAT YOU'RE JEALOUS OF LIEBBER ONCE AGAIN BEING A CANDIDATE FOR THE NOBEL PRIZE, WHILE YOU--

?

I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE NOBEL. I ONLY HOPE THE ACADEMY WON'T MAKE THE MISTAKE OF PUTTING AN IMPOSTOR UP ON A PEDESTAL OF SCIENCE...

:'KOFF, KOFF.: WELL, OUR GOOD SAMUEL'S SLEEPING IT OFF. LOOKS LIKE OUR PARTY IS OVER...

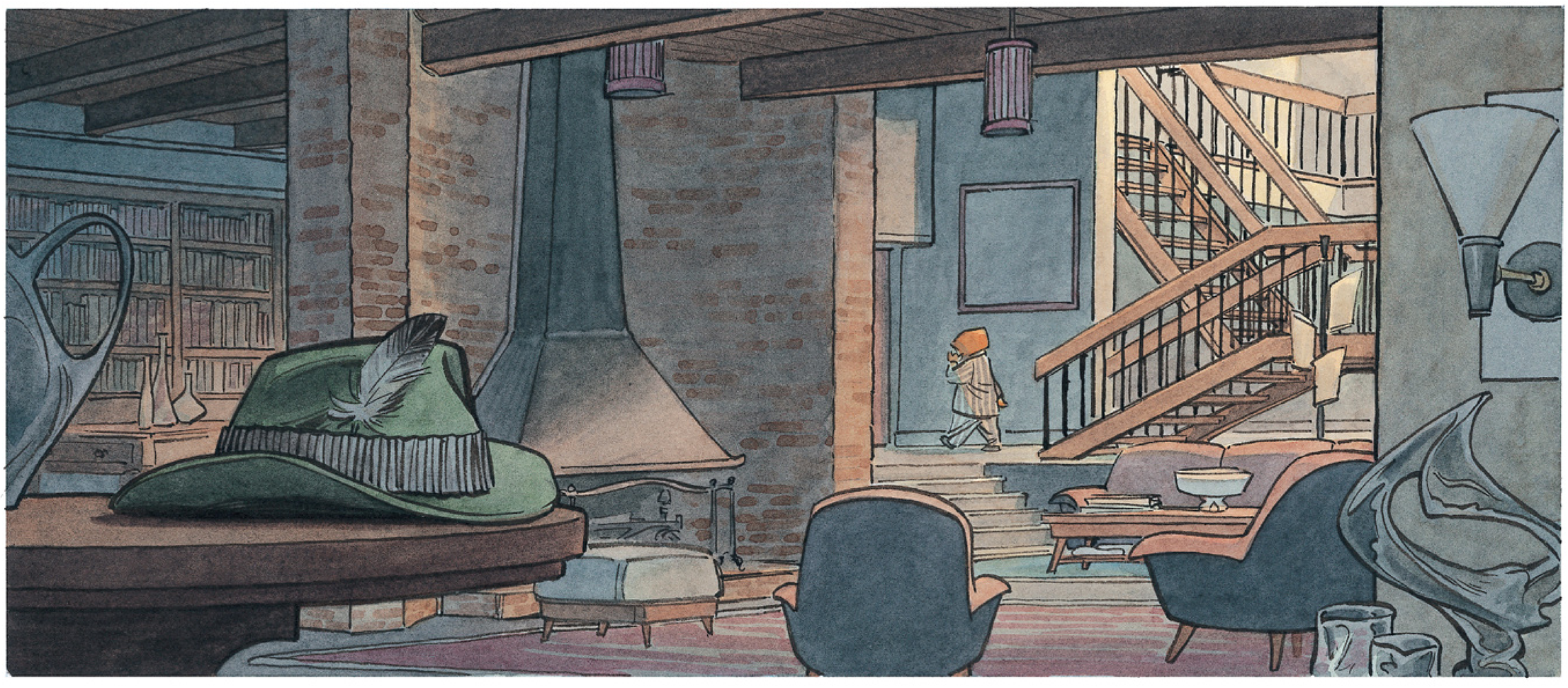
LOOKS LIKE. THANKS TO GOTFIELD'S LITTLE NUMBER, AND LASZLO'S JEALOUSY, WE'RE ALL PUT OFF. I'M GOING HOME.

COME ON, I'LL DRIVE YOU.

HERE YOU GO, PAL. WE DON'T WANT YOU TO CATCH COLD.

15

* REVELATION 9:6.



WHERE DID I PUT THOSE DAMN PILLS?
NATURAL
TROUBLE SLEEPING?

...WE ARE, AT THIS VERY MOMENT, ENGAGED IN THE FINAL PHASE OF THE MERCILESS WAR BETWEEN ATHEIST COMMUNISM AND CHRISTIANITY.
I HAVE HERE IN MY HAND A LIST WITH THE NAMES OF TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOUR CIVIL SERVANTS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. TRAITORS ATTEMPTING TO DESTROY THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR GLORIOUS NATION RIGHT UNDER OUR NOSES.

16

BUT AS A GOOD PATRIOT, I HAVE NO INTENTION OF SITTING, WATCHING, AND DOING NOTHING. AND, IF WE MUST, WE'LL GO FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, WE WILL SEARCH EVERY DARK CORNER, AND WE WILL LEAVE NO ROCK UNTURNED...

...UNTIL WE FIND AND CRUSH THE SCORPION OF COMMUNISM...

TELL ME, DO SENATOR GALLO'S STUPIDITIES HAVE HIM THAT WORRIED, OR IS IT THE LINGERING HANGOVER?

HE'S BEEN LIKE THAT SINCE HE HEARD ABOUT OTERO'S MURDER...

HMM...POOR MAN. THE GUY WHO DID IT MUST'VE REALLY HAD IT IN FOR HIM.

I WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR SAVING SAM THE OTHER NIGHT...

NO PROBLEM...BUT YOU DIDN'T ASK ME TO COME HERE JUST TO THANK ME, DID YOU.

I WANT YOU TO FIND OUT WHO KILLED OTERO. I'M AFRAID SOMEONE MAY BE TAKING DRASTIC MEASURES, GETTING RID OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES THE FAST WAY.

Alma Mayer
LA FONTAINE TODAY

I GET IT. LIKE SCORPIONS...

YOU KNOW? ABOUT THE OTHER DAY... I CAN BE A REAL IDIOT WHEN I MEET A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN...

THAT'S ALL RIGHT. IT WASN'T MY MOST INSPIRED MOMENT EITHER.

WELL, IN THAT CASE IT WAS EVEN WORSE. I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE A FAMOUS WRITER.

Almanach Jean de La Fontaine

WHAT I DON'T GET IS HOW SOMEONE SENSITIVE AND INTELLIGENT CAN BE WITH AN EMPTY-HEADED PLAYBOY LIKE GOTFIELD.

WHAT CAN I SAY...? I STAY WITH HIM BECAUSE HE PROMISED ME A ROMANTIC HONEYMOON TO NIAGARA FALLS.

EVERYBODY'S GOT THEIR OWN SUPERSTITIONS. IF YOU LIKE, I COULD TAKE YOU OUT TO A ROMANTIC DINNER-- NIAGARA FALLS SEEMS A TAD MUCH FOR A FIRST DATE.

HA HA! THANK YOU, BUT I HAPPEN TO BE SPOKEN FOR AT THE MOMENT.

MY FIRST TWO HUSBANDS MADE THE SAME PROMISE AND NEVER KEPT IT... I THINK THE MAN WHO FINALLY DOES WILL BE "THE ONE."

I UNDERSTAND. MAY I?

Alma Meyer

DO YOU LIKE FABLES?

18

I DO NOW.

SERGEI LITVAK WAS THE PERSON CLOSEST TO OTERO. LIKE A BROTHER, ALMOST. THEY MET DURING THE WAR IN SPAIN, WHEN THE PAINTER HAD JOINED THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES.

I WATCHED HIM SILENTLY FOR OVER HALF AN HOUR, NOT WANTING TO RUIN THE MAGICAL MOMENT OF CREATION. THAT FRAGILE CREATURE BECAME A TORNADO WHEN THE SMELL OF PAINT WAS IN HIS SNOUT AND THE FAMILIAR WEIGHT OF A BRUSH WAS IN HIS HAND.

:'KOFF, KOFF...:
THAT NIGHT, THE ONLY ODD THING I NOTICED WAS THE GRAFFITI COVERING THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE...

GRAFFITI?

DON'T TELL ME YOU BELIEVE ALL THAT JAZZ ABOUT "AMERICA, THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY"?

19

YOU SHOULD KNOW, MY FRIEND, THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THIS GREAT COUNTRY WHO DIDN'T LIKE SEEING AN EXILED SPANISH REPUBLICAN AT THE HEAD OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL INSTITUTE. :KOFF! KOFF!:

YOU THINK HE WAS MURDERED FOR POLITICAL REASONS?

NO. MORE LIKE BY SOME ANTI-COMMUNIST FANATIC. NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE A LOT OF WORK...

LITVAK'S THEORY WASN'T TOO OBJECTIVE. EVERYTHING GETS TWISTED UP IN THE EYES OF A MILITANT LEFTIST. I NEEDED SOMETHING ELSE.

A PIECE OF THE PUZZLE THAT WOULD HELP ME SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE...

BLACKSAD!

SINCE POOR OTERO WON'T BE DOING IT HIMSELF, WHY DON'T YOU BRING THIS BACK TO LIEBBER?

FLOP!

ALMA MATER

MANY YEARS HAD GONE BY SINCE I'D LAST SET FOOT ON THE GROUNDS OF THE UNIVERSITY...

MY LIFE AS A HISTORY MAJOR HAD BEEN BRIEF...

...IT ONLY TOOK A YEAR BEFORE I GOT EXPELLED.

YOU STILL ERASE THE BOARD AT THE END OF EACH CLASS?

YES. MY OLD HABIT OF LEAVING NO TRACE...

YOUR HAT.

WHO COULD'VE DONE THAT TO POOR OTERO?

WHOEVER IT WAS, I DON'T THINK THEY WERE AFTER HIM, BUT THE REAL OWNER OF THAT HAT. YOU SHOULD TAKE EXTRA CARE UNTIL THIS CASE IS CRACKED, PROFESSOR.

21

COME NOW, JOHN! YOUR CHILDHOOD DAYS OF HIDING FROM THE POLICE IN THE OLD AQUARIUM BASEMENT ARE OVER.

IS THAT STILL STANDING, BY THE WAY?

I HAVEN'T BEEN BACK THERE IN A DOG'S AGE. I REMEMBER IT USED TO BE THE MINISTER'S "CROWN JEWEL."

YES. IT WAS THE ONLY PROJECT MY FATHER AND I EVER GOT FINANCED-- AND ONLY BECAUSE THE MAYOR THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO BE A GOOD DEAL. WE NEVER COULD GET FUNDS FOR THE LIBRARY OR THE CONSERVATORY.

WELL, YOU DID WHAT YOU COULD...

...OR WHAT YOU WERE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO DO. YOU WERE ABLE TO TEACH A GROUP OF KIDS TO READ, AT LEAST...

I'D GIVE YOU A RIDE HOME, BUT I'M LATE FOR A MEETING...

5C70·25

DON'T WORRY, I DROVE. BE CAREFUL, PROFESSOR.

IT MIGHT SOUND LIKE A CLICHÉ, BUT THE FACT IS THAT I HAD A ROUGH CHILDHOOD AND LIEBBER HAD SAVED MY HIDE MORE THAN A FEW TIMES.

22

IT WAS MY TURN TO RETURN THE FAVOR...

HOTE

PARKING

...AND I DECIDED TO BECOME HIS GUARDIAN ANGEL.

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A GENIUS TO FIGURE OUT WHEN YOU'VE JUST STUMBLED ON A SECRET. IF THE PLACE IS SUSPICIOUS, THE HOUR SUSPICIOUS, AND THE PEOPLE THERE ARE DOING SOMETHING AWFULLY STRANGE...

...THEN YOU CAN BET THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY GOING ON.

PARKING

WAY OUT

EXIT

ELECTRIC CO.

23

BUT IF A GUY WITH A DETONATOR IN HIS HAND ADDS HIMSELF INTO THE EQUATION, IT'S TIME TO STOP THINKING--

--AND RUN!

CLICK

VRROOUM

VROUM

PROFESSOR!!

EXIT

EX

DESOTO

AAAH!!

JOHN?! BUT WHAT--

NO TIME!!

CLAC!

24

25

KRAAASH!!

PAF!

UGH!

WHOMP!

ARGH!

AARGH!

CRACK

UNNNGHH...

LOVELY TO MEET YOU. SEE YOU SOON, CAT.

26

Rachel

WAY
NO SIGN OF THE DRIVER. NOT DEAD, NOT ALIVE, JUST GONE.

TELL DOROTHY I ACCEPT HER INVITATION.

...

IS THIS THE TWO OF YOU?

YES. DURING OUR HONEYMOON... SOAKING WET.

COME ON, JOHN. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE SHE STARTS GETTING ALL MISTY-EYED...

OH, HOW I ENVY YOU, MY DEAR! IT MUST BE FASCINATING, BEING SURROUNDED BY SO MANY CULTURED AND INTELLIGENT PEOPLE!

YOU KNOW, THOSE TWO QUALITIES DON'T NECESSARILY GO HAND IN HAND...

THE CROCODILE'S NAME IS RIBS-- OR AT LEAST THAT'S THE NAME WE HAVE ON HIS RECORDS. VERY SOUGHT-AFTER HIT MAN WHOSE RAP SHEET MAKES CAPONE LOOK LIKE A CHOIRBOY.

EXPLOSIVES EXPERT?

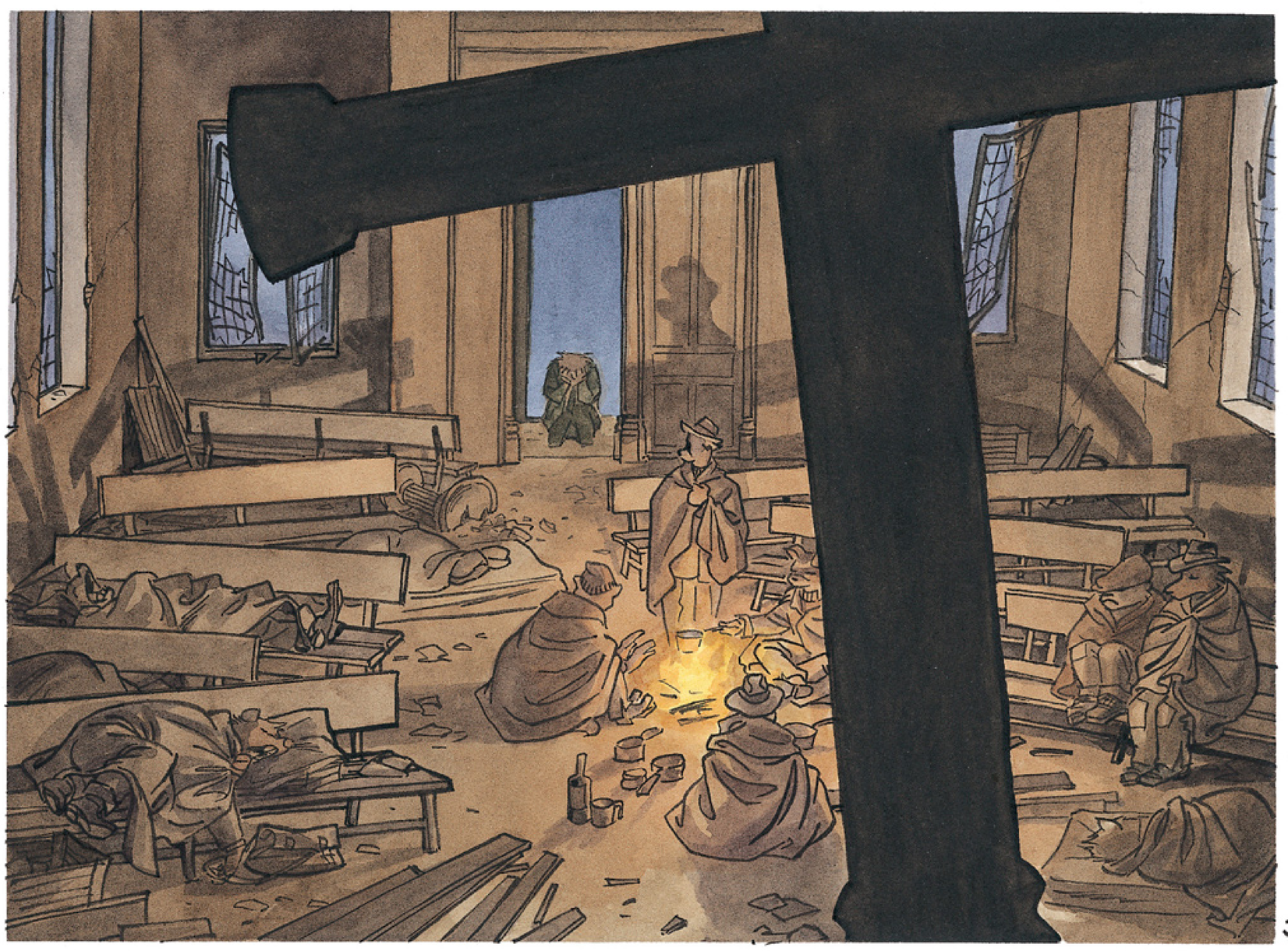
NO. CHEMISTRY ISN'T HIS DOMAIN. HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT. STILL, THOUGH, THAT BOMB-- IT WASN'T SIMPLE...

...EVEN THE LAB HAD A HARD TIME FIGURING OUT ITS COMPOSITION.

28

29

EVERYBODY
DESERVES
ANOTHER CHANCE



JEALOUSY. JEALOUSY AND ENVY.

A PROFESSIONAL JEALOUSY HAD PUSHED HERZL TO HIRE A HIT MAN TO TAKE OUT LIEBBER...AND INDIRECTLY OTERO, THE VICTIM OF A FATAL MISUNDERSTANDING.

THAT WAS MY THEORY...

...BUT I NEEDED HARD PROOF OF A LINK BETWEEN RIBS AND LASZLO.

MAKE ONE MOVE...

...AND THERE'LL BE EMPTY SPACE WHERE YOUR HEAD USED TO BE.

OOOF!

BLAM!

AAAGGH!

ARGH!

YOU MAY BE A GENIUS WITH CHEMISTRY, BUT YOUR TOUGH-GUY ACT NEEDS SOME WORK. SO SMART MOVE, HIRING A PRO LIKE RIBS.

31

SIGHT OF BLOOD MAKES YOU SQUEAMISH, HM?

RRRIIIPP

B65719

THE HORRORS I'VE ENDURED DON'T ALLOW ME TO BE SQUEAMISH AROUND MUCH.

I BELONG TO AN ASSOCIATION OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS WHOSE MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO HUNT DOWN NAZI WAR CRIMINALS.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

OTTO LIEBBER IS NOT WHO HE SAYS HE IS. HE IS A WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING.

DID YOU WANT TO GO THROUGH MY DRAWERS? GO AHEAD! SEE FOR YOURSELF--

--JUST WHO OUR DISTINGUISHED SCIENTIST WAS BEFORE HE BECAME A DEFENDER OF PEACE AND DEMOCRACY.

ALSOZIALISTISCHE ARBEITERPARTE.
IEBBER
ÜNG MINISTERIUMS

Reichsparteit

32

DO YOU READ THE BIBLE...?

...NO, OF COURSE NOT. YOU'RE NOT THAT KIND OF MAN. YOU SHOULD KNOW, THOUGH, THAT THE SKY HAS ALREADY FALLEN ONCE. BUT THERE WAS ONE MAN, NOAH-- CHOSEN BY GOD-- WHO WAS PREPARED FOR THE EVENT.

YOU KNOW, MR. GOTFIELD, I'M CONVINCED THE REDS HAVE DECIDED TO DESTROY US. IT MAY BE A QUESTION OF MONTHS, DAYS, OR EVEN HOURS...

WE MUST BE READY. IT'S OUR DUTY AS GOOD PATRIOTS.

OUR? WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

HELP ME CAPTURE CERTAIN ENEMIES OF OUR NATION...WHO HAPPEN TO BE REGULARS IN YOUR HOME...

GOD, THE HEAT. I'M SUFFO-CATING...

33

BUT OF COURSE. YOU FORGET THAT WE'RE SIXTY-FIVE FEET UNDERGROUND, WITH NOTHING ABOVE US BUT MILES UPON MILES OF DESERT...

"...AND THE AXE IS ALREADY AT THE ROOT OF THE TREES, AND EVERY TREE THAT DOES NOT PRODUCE GOOD FRUIT WILL BE CUT DOWN...

"...AND THROWN INTO THE FIRE..."*

ALMA. NOTHING WOULD HAVE BEEN A BETTER ANTIDOTE FOR THE PAIN LASZLO'S REVELATION HAD CAUSED ME.

FOLLOW US!

The end is NEAR

JUDGEMENT DAY IS NEAR!

THE END IS NEAR

THE END OF THE WORLD IS COMING

FOLLOW US!

SHOWIN TODA

I MARRIED a Communist

WE WERE GOING TO GET TOGETHER AFTER HER RESTAURANT MEETING WITH SOME OF THE OTHER APOSTLES...

EXTRA! EXTRA! GOTFIELD SPILLS THE BEANS! REDS TAKE MAJOR HIT!

...BUT GOTFIELD HAD DECIDED TO SPOIL OUR EVENING.

FASCISTS! ANIMALS!!

LET'S GO, BUDDY-- DON'T MAKE THIS HARDER FOR YOURSELF!

34

* MATTHEW 3:10.

TOO LATE. I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO RESORT TO MY OLD TRICKS...THE ONES THAT NEVER LET ME DOWN.

?!

HOW YOU DOIN', FELLAS? BACKUP HAS ARRIVED.

ANY TROUBLE?

NAH. EVERYTHING'S UNDER CONTROL-- RIGHT, DOLL?

TOO SNUG. I'LL TAKE THE STAIRS.

OKAY.

?!

WHOA! WHAT'S THIS? TROUBLE WITH A SCORNED HUSBAND, HUH?! I SEE YOU'RE MAKIN' YOUR JOB A LITTLE MORE "PERSONAL"...

GAAH! THE DEVIL--?!

SHHH! NOT A PEEP, WEEKLY!

SHUT YOUR DIRTY MOUTH. I NEED TO HIDE HER HERE FOR A FEW DAYS. WE'VE GOT THE FBI ON OUR TRAIL...

MMFF!

THE FBI?! BLACKSAD...WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?

TAKE IT EASY-- IT'LL BE FINE. WEREN'T YOU ON YOUR WAY OUT?

YEAH, BUT... UH...

UHM...

OFF YOU GO. HAVE A GOOD DAY-- I OWE YOU ONE!

SLAM!

36

HEH HEH! THE OLD FBI TRICK! YEAH, I'VE USED THAT ONE BEFORE...!

GOOD OL' WEEKLY! HARD TO KNOW WHAT'S FILTHIER ABOUT HIM-- HIS MIND OR HIS PLACE. HE MUST'VE LEFT THINKING THIS WAS ALL JUST A TRICK TO GET YOU INTO BED...

AND THAT'S NOT THE CASE?

NOT MY STYLE.

WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR STYLE?

37

THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC

THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC HAS ME IN ITS SPELL
THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC THAT YOU WEAVE SO WELL
THOSE ICY FINGERS UP AND DOWN MY SPINE
THE SAME OLD WITCHCRAFT
WHEN YOUR EYES MEET MINE...

...THE SAME OLD TINGLE
THAT I FEEL INSIDE
WHEN THAT ELEVATOR
STARTS ITS RIDE...

DOES "PROJECT NOAH" RING ANY BELLS?

NO. WHY?

A COUPLE DAYS AGO I HEARD GOTFIELD MENTION IT WHILE HE WAS ON THE TELEPHONE. HE WAS ALSO TALKING ABOUT A LIST OF "THE CHOSEN."

DO YOU THINK THAT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH HIS SIDING WITH GALLO?

REALLY? AREN'T YOU AT ALL WORRIED ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD?

THE DAMNED FOOL... IF HE'S SO SURE THE PLANET IS GOING TO BE DESTROYED, HE SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE BEAUTY AROUND HIM...

IT COULD. I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM. WHAT I DO KNOW IS THAT HE'S BEEN ACTING VERY STRANGE LATELY. MORE AND MORE OBSESSED WITH A NUCLEAR ATTACK...

I AM NOW, YEAH. I ONLY HOPE IT WAITS LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO TAKE YOU TO NIAGARA FALLS.

38

YOU ARE THE LOVER THAT I'VE WAITED FOR
THE MATE THAT FATE HAD ME CREATED FOR
AND EVERY TIME YOUR LIPS MEET MINE...

...BABY, DOWN AND DOWN I GO,
ALL AROUND AND ROUND I GO
IN A SPIN, LOVING THE SPIN THAT I'M IN...

...UNDER THAT
OLD BLACK MAGIC
CALLED LOVE.*

TURNS OUT THERE'S A SUPERSTITIOUS SIDE TO YOU AFTER ALL...

WHAT ELSE CAN AN OLD BLACK CAT LIKE ME BELIEVE IN?

:KOFF!
KOFF!:

SO THIS IS THE "LITVAK CHAPEL"? DOESN'T LOOK MUCH LIKE A CHAPEL TO ME...

!

ME NEITHER. AND TELL ME, WHY WOULD A RUSSIAN ATHEIST BE IN A RELIGIOUS PLACE ANYWAYS...?

39

* "THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC," ORIGINALLY WRITTEN BY JOHNNY MERCER AND HAROLD ARLEN IN *1942*.

MAYBE HE CAN TELL US...

LET'S HOPE HE'S AS TALKATIVE AS SOME OF HIS "APOSTLE" COMRADES.

YEAH, BUDDY...'CAUSE THANKS TO THEM, WE KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP TO--YOU AND YOUR FRIEND LIEBBER...

YOU KNOW HOW THIS WORKS. YOU TELL US WHERE THE OLD GUY IS, AND WE'LL LET YOU KEEP DRAWING ON THE WALLS.

GO TO HELL!

I DON'T THINK SO, RED! HELL IS WHERE YOU'RE HEADED IF YOU DON'T COOPERATE!

GO AHEAD! IF YOU THINK THREATENING ME IS GOING TO ACHIEVE ANYTHING, YOU'RE WRONG... I'M TOO OLD AND TOO SICK TO BE AFRAID OF DYING...

WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT DYING? WHY USE FORCE WHEN TRUTH SERUMS EXIST?

YOU GODDAMN BASTARDS!

SAY, HE DOESN'T LOOK TOO GOOD...

...NOT TOO GOOD AT ALL...

SHIT! DAMN GEEZER GOT HIS WAY AFTER ALL.

HUH...HEADS OR TAILS FOR WHO TYPES UP THE REPORT?

40

I ASKED ALMA TO GIVE ME A COUPLE DAYS BEFORE MEETING UP WITH HER. FIRST, I HAD TO FIND LIEBBER, AND I KNEW JUST WHERE TO LOOK...

YOU KNOW, JOHN? FISH ARE FASCINATING CREATURES.

YOU SEE THAT BLUE ONE THERE? IT'S A REMARKABLE PREDATOR. IT EATS MAINLY THE SMALL FISH YOU SEE THERE AROUND IT...

...BUT WHEN IT FEELS THAT ITS LIFE CYCLE IS OVER, IT APPROACHES A SCHOOL OF THE SMALL FISH AND ALLOWS ITSELF TO BE DEVOURED BY THEM...

?!

MAYBE THAT'S ITS WAY OF ASKING FOR THEIR FORGIVENESS AND REPAYING ITS DEBT. NATURE IS WISE. IT ENDS ONE LIFE, AND WITH THAT ALLOWS OTHERS TO CARRY ON.

WE MAKE A LOT OF MISTAKES THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES. IT'S ONLY NATURAL; THERE'S NO OTHER WAY TO LEARN...THE ANGUISH IS WHEN OTHERS PAY FOR THOSE MISTAKES. IT'S UNFAIR-- IT'S CRUEL AND TRAGIC.

41

THE OTHER DAY, WHILE I WAS STANDING IN THE RUINS OF MY FATHER'S CHURCH, I CAME TO A HORRIBLE REALIZATION: MY LIFE HAS BEEN ONE GIGANTIC MISTAKE. A FAILED PROJECT.

NOT MY WORK, NOR MY FATHER'S WORK...NO GOOD CAME OUT OF ANY OF IT. I WANTED TO BETTER THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD AND I FAILED. I GAVE UP TOO SOON. NOW EVERYTHING IS EVEN WORSE.

THIS AQUARIUM WAS INAUGURATED BY REVEREND FATHER Friedrich Liebbe

1930

I WENT BACK TO MY COUNTRY WITH HOPES OF BUILDING A NEW ORDER, CREATING A BETTER WORLD...AND IT ENDED UP BEING THE MOST SENSELESS CATASTROPHE OF ALL TIME.

I CHOSE THE WRONG SIDE. AND NOW MY HOMELAND IS NOTHING BUT A GREAT HEAP OF SMOKING RUBBLE...

AND THEN I LISTENED TO LITVAK'S ADVICE. A GOOD MAN... BUT AS DELUDED IN HIS WAYS AS I WAS. HIS THEORY SEEMED LOGICAL: THE ONLY WAY TO MAINTAIN OUR PRECARIOUS WORLD PEACE WAS TO HAVE A BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN THE TWO DOMINANT SIDES.

FOR MONTHS, I'VE BEEN FEEDING LITVAK THE INFORMATION NECESSARY FOR THE RUSSIANS TO PRODUCE THEIR OWN H-BOMB.

I'M NOT YET DEAD AND ALREADY I'M IN HISTORY BOOKS. I'M SEEN AS A WISE MAN, SOMEONE CAPABLE OF UNRAVELING ALL OF NATURE'S MYSTERIES...

...AND YET I'VE MADE A MISTAKE OF COLOSSAL PROPORTIONS!

AND EVEN WORSE... I NO LONGER HAVE TIME TO FIX IT...

42

GOODBYE, SMART-ALECK.

MAYBE LIEBBER WAS RIGHT. THE SECRET OF THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON EVER IMAGINED BY MANKIND WAS PROBABLY ALREADY OUT AND SPREADING LIKE A CANCER, AND IT WAS SURELY TOO LATE TO AVOID IT...

BUT I HAD TO AT LEAST TRY. I WENT TO SEE LITVAK, HOPING HE HADN'T ALREADY PASSED ALONG THE FORMULAS...

...BUT HE WASN'T FEELING VERY COMMUNICATIVE.

ONCE AGAIN, I HAD TO RELY ON MY INSTINCTS...

43

THE PAINTING!

HOW HAD I NOT SEEN IT BEFORE?!

I DON'T LIKE THE DOCKS. DEFINITELY NOT A PLACE I'D RECOMMEND HANGING AROUND. DOCKS ARE USUALLY THE PLACE IN MOVIES WHERE THINGS END POORLY.

GOOD EVENING, SIR. MY NAME IS JOHN H. BLACKMORE, CUSTOMS INSPECTOR. WOULD THIS HAPPEN TO BE THE VESSEL TRANSPORTING PAINTINGS FOR THE GOTFIELD FOUNDATION EXHIBIT IN EAST BERLIN?

?

PFF--!

WELL, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'M GOING TO HAVE A LOOK AROUND TO MAKE SURE EVERYTHING'S ALL--

FRITZ, JORGEN, DER SCHEISSPOLIZIST HIER GEHT UNS. AUS DIE EIER!*

ERK!

44

* FRED, GEORGE, THE SHIT-COP IS ON TO US. OFF YOUR BALLS! (GERMAN)

SPLAT!

MMF!

SPLOTCH!

HNGH!

MY BAG OF TRICKS WAS EVIDENTLY IN NEED OF A RESTOCK...

IN ORDER TO DETECT THE DIFFERENT LAYERS HIDDEN UNDERNEATH A PAINTING'S FINAL VERSION, ART SPECIALISTS USUALLY USE X-RAYS. THOSE LAYERS, OFTEN UNFINISHED MISSTEPS, ARE CALLED *PENTIMENTI*-- REPENTANCES.

LITVAK HAD TRANSCRIBED LIEBBER'S FORMULAS ONTO A CANVAS, THEN, OVER THEM, HE HAD PAINTED ONE OF HIS PIECES. AND HIDDEN UNDER THAT THICK LAYER OF PAINT, THE SECRET OF THE H-BOMB WAS SET TO GO BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN.

HE EVEN WENT SO FAR AS TO MAKE TWO IDENTICAL COPIES OF THE *RED SOUL* PAINTING.

THAT WAY, ONCE THE EXHIBIT WAS OVER, ONE OF THE PAINTINGS WOULD RETURN WITHOUT ANYONE BEING THE WISER...

...WHILE THE ONE CONTAINING THE INFORMATION WOULD STAY BEHIND IN THE HAPPY HANDS OF RUSSIAN POLITICIANS AND SCIENTISTS, ALL PREPARED TO SNATCH THE KEY TO PANDORA'S BOX WITH THE HELP OF A SIMPLE X-RAY.

AUSTRALIA

BUT...AUSTRALIANS HAVE THE RIGHT TO ENJOY LITVAK'S WORK AS WELL, DON'T THEY?

45

IF SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME TWO WEEKS AGO THAT I'D SOON BE PACKING MY BAGS TO GO AWAY ON A HONEYMOON, I'D'VE LAUGHED IN THEIR FACE...

Travel
NIAGARA FALLS

...BUT THEN AGAIN, LIFE IS FULL OF SURPRISES!

CRAASH!

FBI

SO WE'RE TAKING A LITTLE TRIP, I SEE?

YOU DON'T MIND US TAKING A QUICK LOOK AROUND?

SURE THING. LOOK ALL YOU LIKE, IF YOU DO ME A FAVOR IN RETURN-- GO BREATHE HEAVY ON SOMEONE ELSE.

LOOKIE HERE! SO THIS IS WHY WE'RE IN SUCH A HURRY TO LEAVE...

LET ME GUESS: YOU'VE BEEN PLAYING DOCTOR RECENTLY.

SODIUM PEN

HELLO, MR. BLACKSAD. DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

I THINK I'VE SEEN YOU ON THE BOX... YOU DON'T HOST A GAME SHOW, BY ANY CHANCE?

46

I'M SENATOR GALLO. THE NAME DOESN'T SOUND FAMILIAR?

YOU KNOW...ME AND POLITICS. YOU'RE REALLY NOT THE HOST OF THAT ONE LATE-NIGHT GAME SHOW...?

MY, SUCH LANGUAGE! WHERE ARE YOUR RHETORICAL SKILLS? CICERO WOULD SPIN IN HIS GRAVE!

LISTEN, TRASH! I WILL NOT ALLOW A TWO-BIT SHIT-STIRRER LIKE YOU TO DISRESPECT A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE!

CUT THE CRAP! I'LL GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT: WE BOTH KNOW YOU KNOW WHERE LIEBBER IS HIDING.

YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

ALL RIGHT, THEN. LET'S CHANGE TOPICS. LET'S TALK ABOUT LITVAK, THAT RUSSIAN PAINTER WHO TURNED UP DEAD. IT SEEMS THAT THE KILLER HAS ALREADY BEEN APPREHENDED...

...AND BETTER YET, THERE IS A LONG LIST OF EVIDENCE AGAINST THE SUSPECT THAT ALL MATCHES UP. WE EVEN FOUND PENTOTHAL IN HIS HOME.

NOT TO MENTION ALL THE PRINTS HE LEFT IN THE PAINTER'S STUDIO...

...ANYWAY. THERE IS A HUNDRED-PERCENT CHANCE HE'S GOING TO FRY IN THE CHAIR. I REALLY WOULDN'T LIKE TO BE IN HIS SHOES RIGHT NOW.

CLI
CLICLICL
CLICK
CLICLI
CLICKC
CLIC

THE POLICE STILL AREN'T CLEAR ON ONE THING: WHETHER IT WAS MURDER...

...OR AN ABSURD ACCIDENT ON THE VICTIM'S BEHALF, TRYING TO INJECT EXPIRED MEDICATION. PERHAPS A CLEVER DETECTIVE SUCH AS YOURSELF COULD HELP US...

47

THE BEST QUALITY IN A GOOD DETECTIVE ISN'T THAT THEY'RE A CRACK SHOT, OR THAT THEY'RE IN GREAT SHAPE, BUT THAT THEY'RE A QUICK THINKER. THAT'S WHAT SETS THEM APART FROM "TWO-BIT SHIT-STIRRERS."

IT WAS CLEAR AS DAY THAT GALLO HAD BOUGHT GOTFIELD, OFFERING HIM SOMETHING EVEN A LARGE PERSONAL FORTUNE COULDN'T BUY. A PRIVILEGE THAT ONLY AN ABUSE OF POWER COULD GIVE HIM: TO BE ONE OF THE "CHOSEN ONES."

HUH! HUH! HUH!

ALL THIS WAS VERY UNDEMOCRATIC, COMING FROM A "CHAMPION OF LIBERTY" LIKE GALLO, AND I WAS SURE THAT IT HELD THE LAST PIECE OF THE PUZZLE IN SAVING PROFESSOR LIEBBER.

BONES! MOUNTAINS OF BONES BLEACHING IN THE SUNLIGHT! THAT'S WHAT WE'LL ALL BE IF WE DON'T TAKE THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS! I NEED FOOD! TONS OF FOOD... AND FUEL, TOO--! YEAH!

SO, GOTFIELD, STILL HAVEN'T FOUND YOUR BONE?

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU'VE GOT ALL A MAN COULD DESIRE...

HA HA HA! NOW THAT'S A GOOD ONE!

61-90-34! YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY BLIND, BUDDY! HERE, TAKE THIS!

THE HOUSE, THE CAR, THE SAFE... YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL! I CAN'T FIT IT IN MY SHELTER...

48

ALMA'S WORDS ECHOED IN MY HEAD...

...PROJECT NOAH."

NOW I UNDERSTOOD HOW THAT TWISTED BASTARD GALLO HAD CONVINCED GOTFIELD. ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS PUSH ON THE WEAKEST POINT.

THE "PROJECT" CONCERNED A GROUP OF HANDPICKED PEOPLE, EACH A HOUSEHOLD NAME. IT STATED THAT, IN THE EVENT OF NUCLEAR WAR, THEY WOULD BE QUICKLY EVACUATED TO AN ENORMOUS FALLOUT SHELTER.

IN MY HANDS WAS A LIST OF THE "CHOSEN ONES" SET TO BENEFIT FROM THIS GRIM PLAN. THEIR UNITING QUALITY WAS THEIR SUPPORT OF THE INFAMOUS SENATOR.

THERE THEY GO!

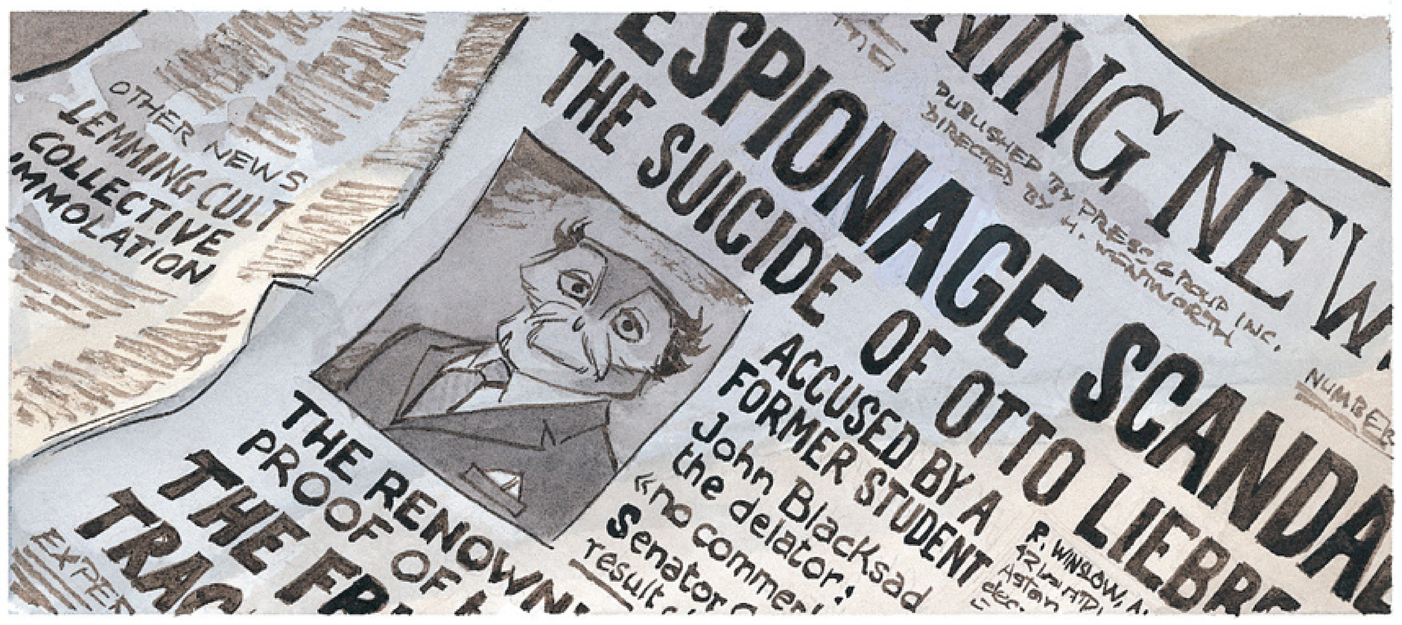
DON'T YOU HEAR THEM?! SIRENS--!

THE BOMBS! I HAVE TO HURRY!!

49

ING NEWS

MORNING NEWS
ESPIONAGE SCANDAL


OTHER NEWS
LEMMING CULT
COLLECTIVE
IMMOLATION
ESPIONAGE SCANDAL
THE SUICIDE OF OTTO LIEBR
ACCUSED BY A
FORMER STUDENT
John Blacksad
the delator
PUBLISHED BY PRESS GROUP INC.
DIRECTED BY H. WENTWORTH
NUMBER
THE RENOWN
PROOF OF
THE FR
TRAG

SO HOW WAS THE ROMANTIC GETAWAY TO NIAGARA FALLS?
UNFORGETTABLE.

JOHN CASANOVA! THAT'S WHAT WE SHOULD CALL YOU!

HERE, WEEK, THAT'S FOR YOU.

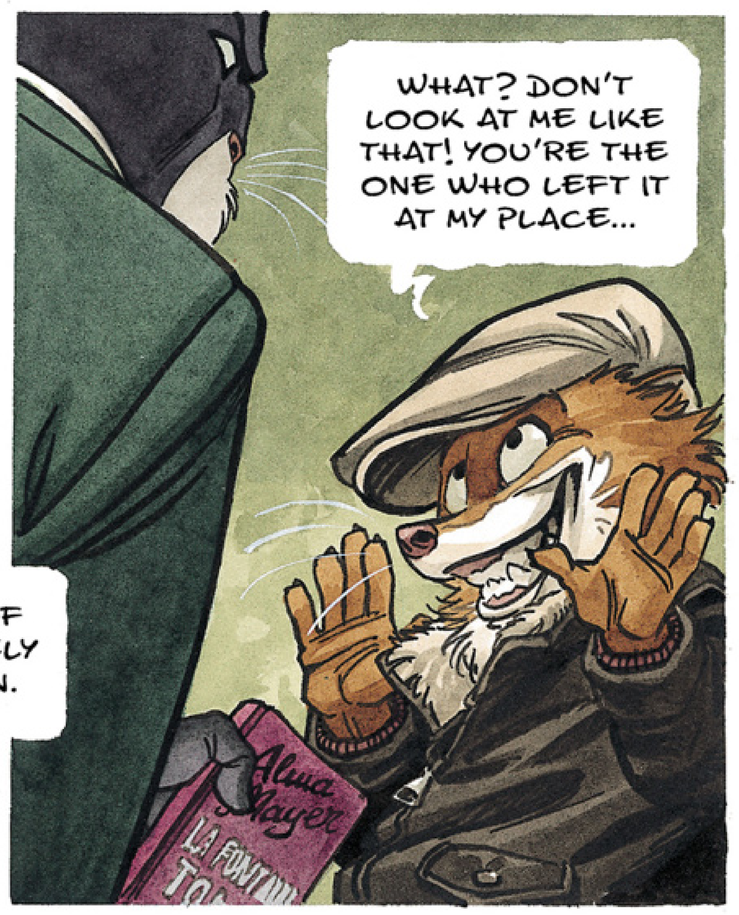
IT'S A GIFT...?
A POISONED ONE. I WOULDN'T OPEN IT.

HEY! YOU CAN'T DO THAT TO ME-- THE KING OF GOSSIP! MY MOTHER WAS A BUSYBODY AND I'M PROUD TO CARRY ON THE TRADITION...!

EASY-- DON'T GET YOUR JOCKEYS IN A TWIST. MAYBE YOU'LL GET THE CHANCE TO READ IT BEFORE TOO LONG... IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO HAPPEN TO ME, PUBLISH WHAT YOU FIND IN THERE.
?

ALL RIGHT, CAPTAIN INTRIGUE-- WHATEVER YOU WANT. HEY, I ALSO BROUGHT YOU SOMETHING...

Alma Mayer
LA FONTAINE
!


SPEAKING OF WHICH, LOVELY DEDICATION.
WHAT? DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO LEFT IT AT MY PLACE...
Alma Mayer

WEEKLY WAS HEADED HOME WITH A REAL TICKING TIME BOMB. THAT ENVELOPE CONTAINED THE LIST OF THOSE IN "PROJECT NOAH"-- AND WHO JUST HAPPENED TO BE INFLUENTIAL SUPPORTERS OF GALLO AND THE MAJORITY PARTY.

IN ORDER TO WIPE MY RECORD AND AVOID BEING FRAMED FOR LITVAK'S MURDER, I HAD THREATENED THE "INCORRUPTIBLE" SENATOR GALLO WITH MAKING THIS LIST PUBLIC, WHICH WOULD HAVE OUTED A HELL OF A LOT OF PEOPLE AND DELIGHTED REPORTERS AND THE MINORITY PARTY.

THE SENATOR ULTIMATELY AGREED TO STAGE A STORY ABOUT LIEBBER'S SUICIDE RATHER THAN TEST PUBLIC OPINION. IT WAS PUBLIC OPINION THAT HE SO LOVED TO MANIPULATE, AFTER ALL.

I ALSO HAD TO PAY A HEAVY PRICE-- DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS, GALLO KEPT ME LOCKED UP FOR TWO WEEKS. ENOUGH TIME TO MISS MY DATE WITH ALMA.

WHEN I FINALLY GOT OUT, I DESPERATELY TRIED TO FIND HER...BUT WITH NO LUCK. SHE HAD DISAPPEARED. CUPID HAD PLAYED ANOTHER FAST ONE ON ME...

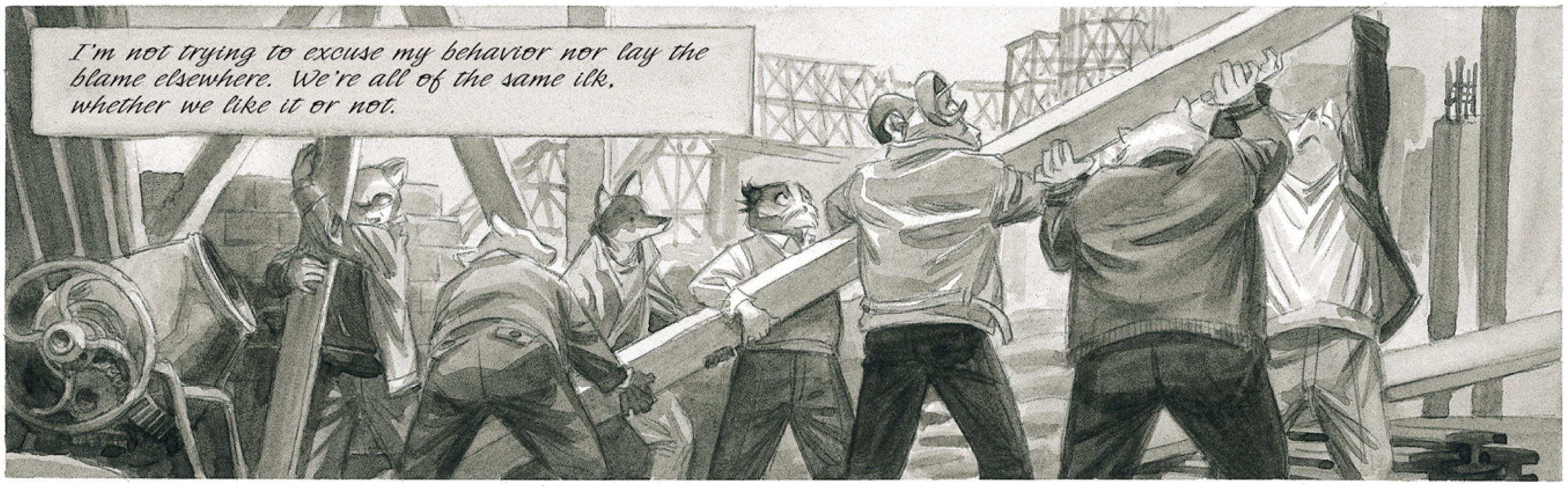
...BUT AT LEAST, SOMEWHERE, LIEBBER WAS STILL ALIVE.

My dear friend,

All my life I've searched for a way to give meaning to my existence by trying to serve society as best as I could.

52

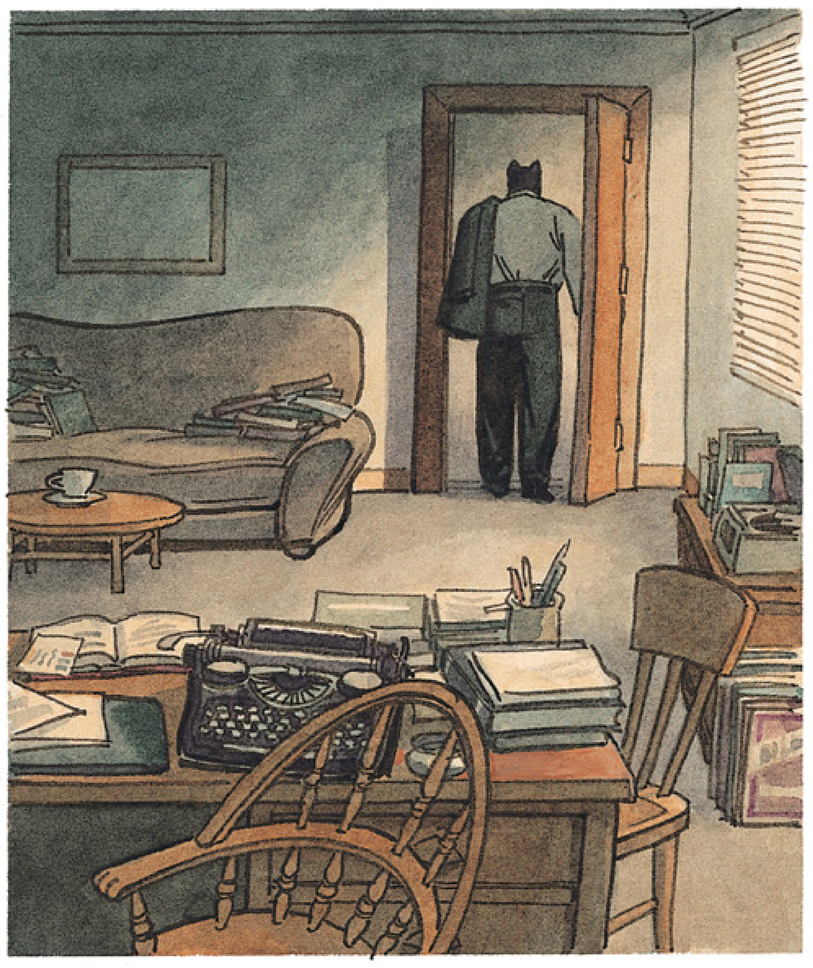
HAUPTSTRASSE
I had decided to dedicate myself and strive for the loftiest realms of society in order to attain my goals, but succeeded only in accumulating failures.
The higher I climbed, the more I strayed from my true path. I put my science at the service of duplicitous interests. Without even realizing it, I had sold out my ideals and given up my integrity.

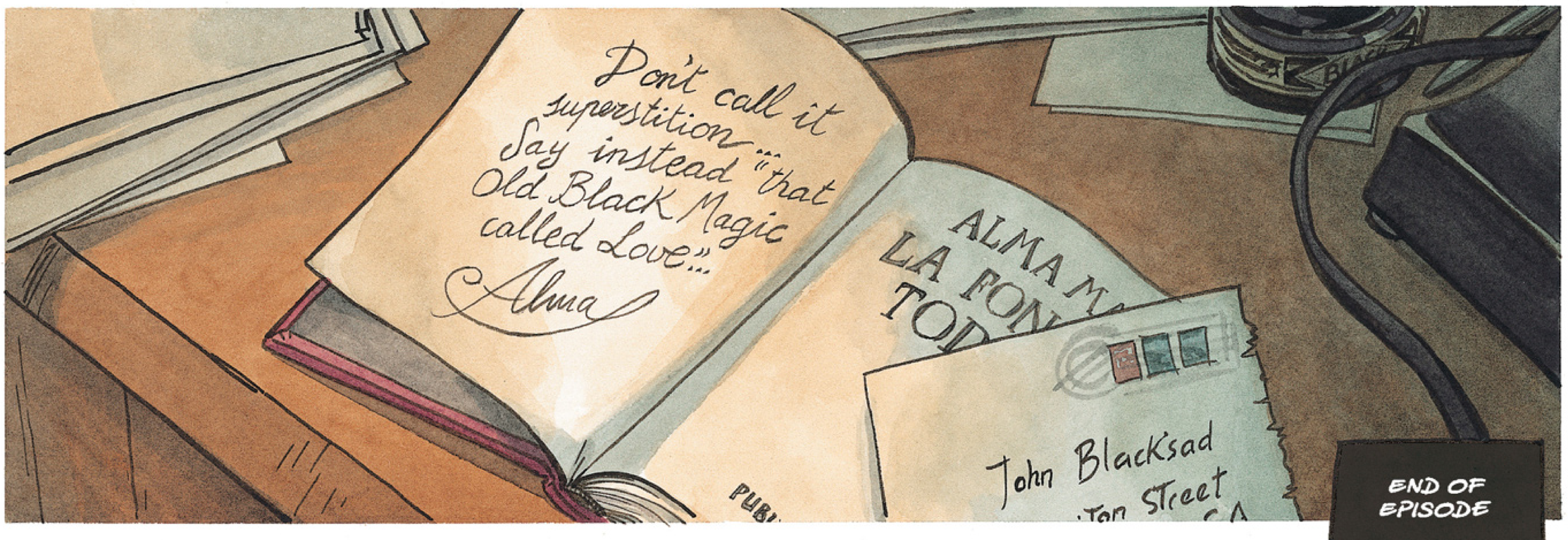

I'm not trying to excuse my behavior nor lay the blame elsewhere. We're all of the same ilk, whether we like it or not.

I would, though, take advantage of this opportunity to give you my thanks for everything you did for me. If it gives you any comfort, I will tell you that, day by day, I return to once again feeling happy and fulfilled.

Take good care of yourself, smart aleck.
The Professor.

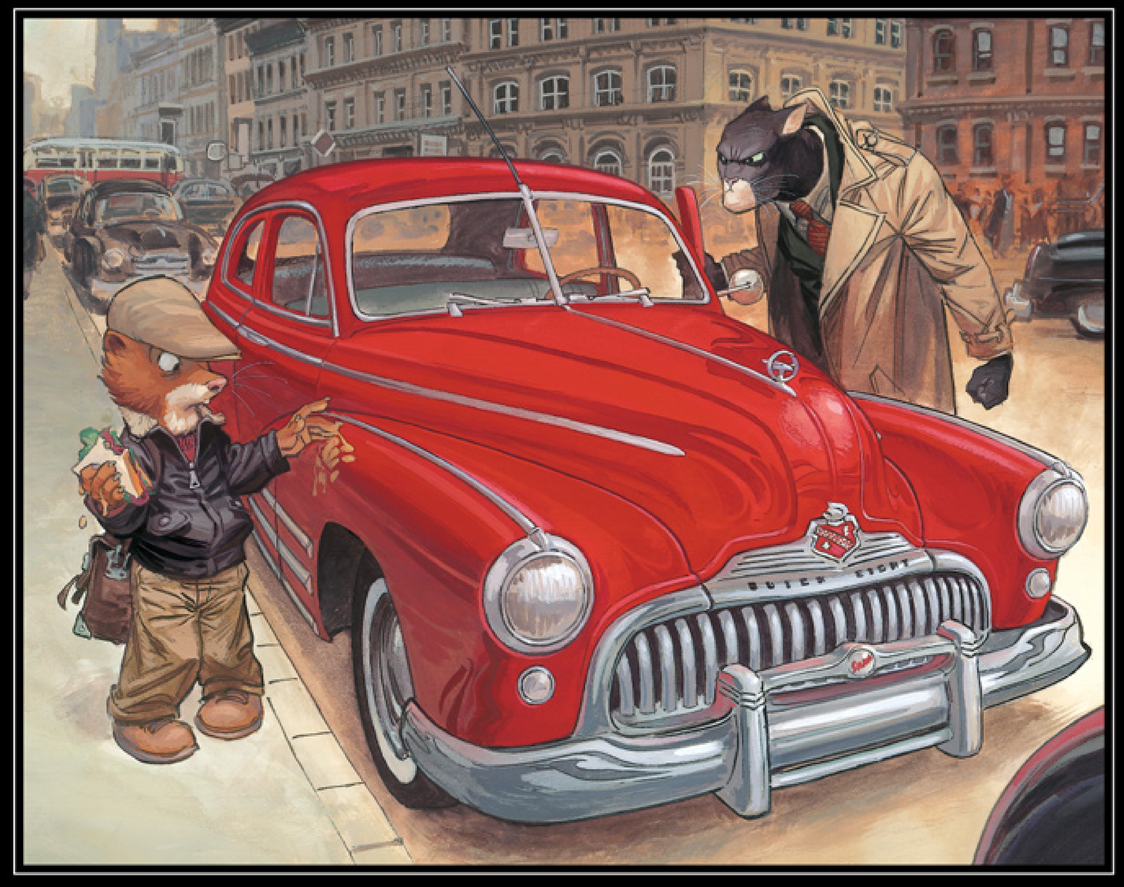
53



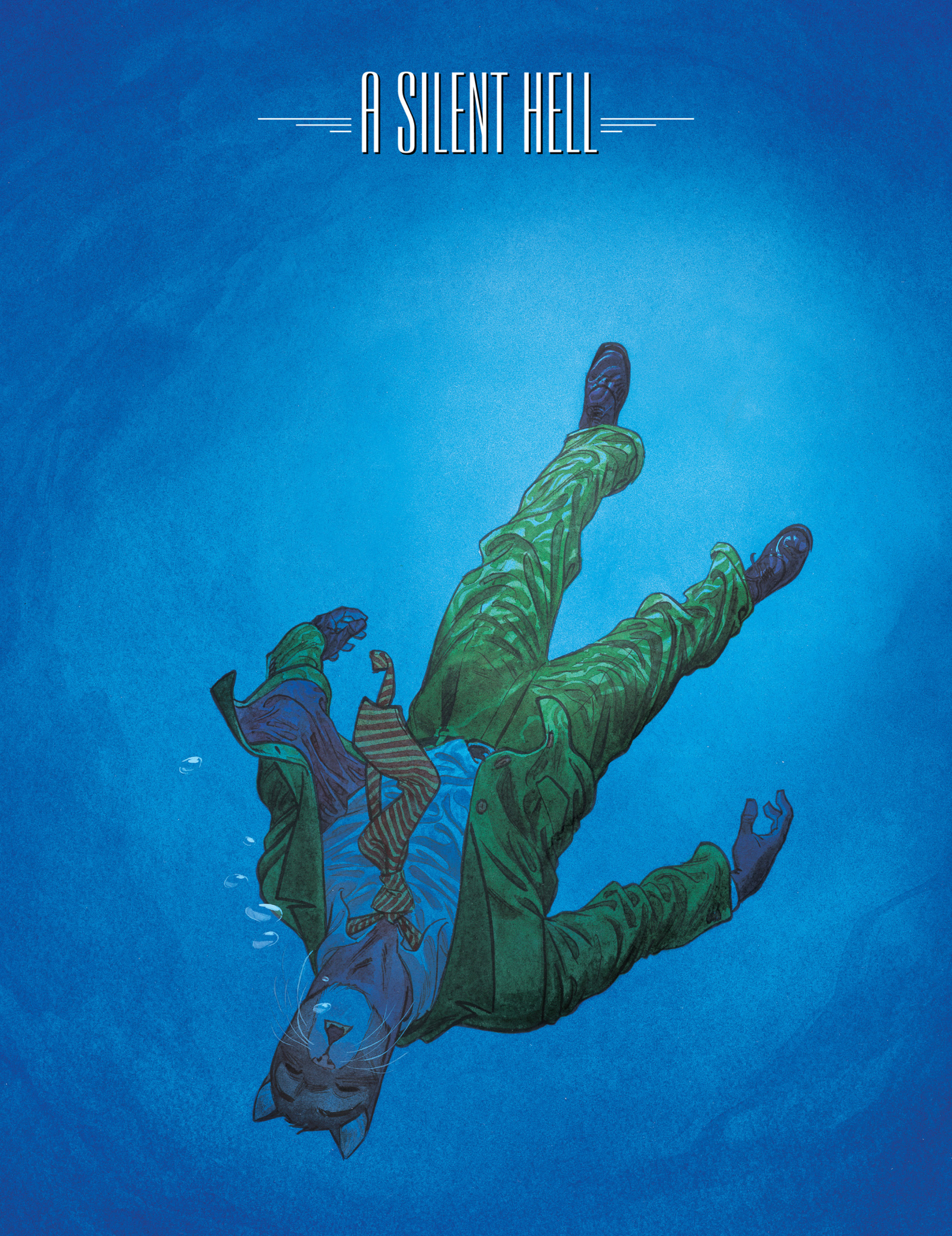


END OF EPISODE

JUANJO GUARNIDO & JUAN DIAZ CANALES
- 2005 -


BUICK EIGHT

A SILENT HELL



Written by

JUAN DIAZ CANALES

Art by

JUANJO GUARNIDO

Lettering by

STUDIO CUTIE

Preceding:
The original cover to this album as published by Dargaud, November 2005

1

SARTRE SAYS THAT HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE.

WISE WORDS, BUT I THINK THEY CAPTURE A STATE OF MIND RATHER THAN A UNIVERSAL TRUTH.

I ADMIT, OTHER PEOPLE CAN MAKE LIFE A LIVING HELL.

BUT THEY CAN ALSO BE YOUR PARTNERS IN PARADISE.

FOR ME, HELL IS NOTHINGNESS.

A PLACE WITHOUT FRIENDS, WITHOUT MUSIC, WITHOUT WORDS TO STIMULATE THE IMAGINATION, OR BEAUTY TO AROUSE THE SENSES.

CLAP CLAP CLAP

BRAVO, BRAVO, BRAVO!

I LOVE THIS CITY! THE NIGHT'S OFF TO A SWELL START!

AND YOU KNOW? THE LONGER WE STAY, THE HOTTER THE DANCERS GET...

2

LISTEN, WEEK, THE GUY WE WERE SUPPOSED TO MEET ISN'T COMING...

YOU MEAN JUNIOR HARPER? ... THAT'S *HIS* LOSS!

I'M GOING TO THE EBONY LOUNGE TO ASK SOME QUESTIONS.

OKAY. I'LL LET YOU KNOW HOW THE SHOW ENDS.

BETTER HEAD OVER TO THIS HOTEL INSTEAD. JUNIOR'S BEEN HOLED UP THERE SINCE HE GOT OUT. MAYBE YOU CAN FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.

HE MIGHT KNOW WHERE SEBASTIAN'S HIDING...

NEW ORLEANS 'N JAZZ FUN

JAZZ 'N FUN LOUNGE

LIQUORS

BEER

CALL ME IF YOU FIND ANYTHING...

WHY DOES HE ALWAYS DO THIS TO ME? THAT BUM! IF I'D KNOWN, I NEVER WOULD HAVE GOTTEN HIM THE JOB.

STATE PENITENTIARY

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, MR. LACHAPELLE...

3

...WHEN WHAT'S NEWS ASKED FOR A PIECE ON THE NEW ORLEANS BLUES SCENE, I NEVER THOUGHT I'D END UP STROLLING THROUGH THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST PRISON...

HA, HA, HA! CALL ME FAUST, MY FRIEND.

SADLY, THIS PENITENTIARY'S ROLL CALL READS LIKE A LIST OF "GREATEST HITS."

AND I KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. MY RECORD LABEL SPECIALIZES IN, SHALL WE SAY, "RACE" MUSIC.

GENTLEMEN, IF I COULD HAVE JUST A MOMENT...

REALLY, THE WARDEN MIGHT HAVE BEEN GRACIOUS ENOUGH TO SPARE US A BODYGUARD... NEVER MIND HIS "LACK OF RESOURCES."

HE'S NOT CRAZY ABOUT JOURNALISTS SNOOPING AROUND HIS TERRITORY. BUT DON'T WORRY... YOU'RE SAFE.

CLICK!

PERFECT... THANKS!

?

THAT'S RIGHT, PAL. NO NEED TO WORRY...

...AS LONG AS YOU'RE WITH FAUST LACHAPELLE, YOU'VE GOT NOTHIN' TO FEAR.

4

HE HAS EVERY JUDGE AND DISTRICT ATTORNEY IN THIS TOWN...

...EATIN' FROM THE PALM OF HIS HAND.

MEET JUNIOR HARPER, ONE OF THE BEST MUSICIANS ON THE "LACHAPELLE RECORDS" LABEL... HE'S HERE PAYING HIS DEBT TO SOCIETY...

YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD, FAUST. BETTER NOT NEGLECT YOUR HEALTH. EVEN A COMMON COLD, AT YOUR AGE...

UH... I'VE GOT WHAT I NEED. SHALL WE GO?

AU REVOIR, FAUST! ONCE I MAKE PAROLE, I PROMISE T'COME SEE YOU...

...AN' TALK ABOUT THE GOOD OL' DAYS...

THANKS FOR BRINGING ME HERE. I'M SORRY IF IT WAS A BIT ROUGH FOR YOU...

NOT FOR MY HEALTH... BUT NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I AM IN NEED OF SOMEONE DISCREET TO LEND A HAND WITH A PRIVATE MATTER. I UNDERSTAND YOU MAY KNOW JUST THE RIGHT PERSON...

KOF! KOF!

ARE YOU OKAY?

IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE I CAN DO...

IT'S FINE. IT WILL PASS... DO YOU MIND DRIVING?

THIS MIGHT COME AS A SURPRISE TO AN OUTSIDER...

5

...BUT MADAME GIBRALTAR IS SOMETHING OF A LOCAL CELEBRITY, AND HER MEDICINAL ARTS ARE WELL RESPECTED. SHE CLAIMS TO BE THE REINCARNATION OF MARIE LAVEAU...

AND SOME CLAIM THAT CATS ALWAYS LAND ON THEIR FEET, BUT I WOULDN'T THROW MYSELF OFF THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING TO TEST THAT THEORY... WHY DID YOU CALL ME, MONSIEUR FAUST?

I HAVE CANCER, MR. BLACKSAD. THE DOCTORS HAVE ALREADY GIVEN ME UP FOR DEAD... AND I WOULD BE, IF NOT FOR MADAME'S CARE.

BUT BEFORE I GO, I HAVE SOME LOOSE ENDS TO TIE UP. I NEED TO FIND SEBASTIAN "LITTLE HAND" FLETCHER.

THE PIANO PLAYER? I LOVE HIS MUSIC...

FOR AS LONG AS I'VE KNOWN HIM, I'VE DONE EVERYTHING I COULD FOR HIM, PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY. BUT HE'S BEEN MISSING FOR MONTHS NOW.

ZAS!

THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN HE'S IN DANGER...

HE'S A HEROIN ADDICT. I'M AFRAID HE'S IN DANGER OF DOING SOMETHING STUPID.

6

"LITTLE HAND" Fletcher
NEW LP
LACHAPELLE RECORDS
YOU SEE, I'M NOT JUST A PATRON TO SEBASTIAN... IF ANYTHING WERE TO HAPPEN TO HIM, IT WOULD BE LIKE LOSING A SON...
MAYBE "MADAME" CAN FIND HIM IN HER CRYSTAL BALL...
I APPRECIATE YOUR DARK SENSE OF HUMOR, BLACKSAD, BUT IF I HAD YOU COME ALL THIS WAY, IT'S ONLY BECAUSE MR. WEEKLY ASSURED ME...
...THAT YOU'RE JUST THE PERSON TO FIND SEBASTIAN WITHOUT MAKING THE FUR FLY...
WILL YOU TAKE THE CASE?
YOU PUT ON THAT WHOLE TOUGH GUY BIT, JUST TO TAKE THE JOB ANYWAY...
IMPERIAL SHOES
America's Greatest Clothiers
STEIN'S
LACHAPELLE RECORDS
IT'S ALL MARKETING, WEEK. YOU'VE GOT TO PLAY THE PART: THE HARD-BOILED MOVIE P.I. IT'S WHAT THEY EXPECT.

VRROOOOMM!!

LOOK OUT!

SCRREEEEECH!!

WELL, WELL... IT SEEMS I'M LATE FOR THE MEETING.

...AND AS SOON AS I FOUND OUT THAT ARROGANT, NO-GOOD FAUST WAS GOING TO HIRE ANOTHER DETECTIVE, I SAID TO MYSELF: NO COLLEAGUE DESERVES TO BE CHEATED LIKE I WAS BY THAT SWINDLER.

I'M PRETTY SURE I'D RATHER BE SWINDLED THAN CRUSHED UNDER THE WHEELS OF YOUR CAR.

LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, WE PROFESSIONALS SHOULD STICK TOGETHER...

...UNTIL THAT SWINE LACHAPELLE FIRED ME AND BROKE OUR CONTRACT...

HO, HO, HO! TED LEEMAN, PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR. I WAS ON THE CASE OF SEBASTIAN "LITTLE HAND"...

MAYBE HE DIDN'T LIKE YOUR DRIVING...

8

OR MAYBE, LIKE FAUST TELLS IT, YOU ASKED FOR MORE AND MORE MONEY, AND THREATENED BLACKMAIL... ALL VERY "PROFESSIONAL"!

I SEE HE'S ALREADY POISONED YOU WITH HIS LIES.

HE TOLD US A FEW OTHER LIES, TOO, LIKE THE ONE ABOUT YOUR TASTE FOR ALCOHOL...

... AND THAT WHEN YOU'RE SOUSED, YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY A MODEL OF DISCRETION...

THAT SON OF A BITCH!

I WAS GOING TO INVITE YOU FOR A DRINK, BUT I SEE WHOSE SIDE YOU'VE TAKEN...

LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, THESE ARE TOUGH TIMES FOR HONEST PROFESSIONALS.

WEEKLY, IF I EVER START ACTING LIKE THAT, REMIND ME TO GET THE HELL OUT OF THIS JOB.

VROOOOOOOO

SCREEECH!

SCREEEEEEH

9

THE SPOT WHERE JAZZ WAS BORN

WE LIVE IN A GREAT NATION; ONE IN WHICH FREE ENTERPRISE ENABLES OUR EVERY DESIRE TO BE GRATIFIED. JUST LOOK AT ANY SUPERMARKET...

WELCOME TO THE *EBONY*, PAL...

...WHERE YOU CAN FIND ALL KINDS OF HAPPINESS.

... AND IF YOU CAN'T FIND WHAT YOU WANT, DON'T WORRY. SOONER OR LATER SOMEONE WILL COME UP WITH A WAY TO SATISFY ALL YOUR NEEDS.

BUMP!

PERFECT. THEN I'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE... BECAUSE I'LL BE THE HAPPIEST CAT IN THE WORLD IF I CAN JUST FIND SEBASTIAN FLETCHER.

SEBASTIAN... A GREAT MUSICIAN... AND AN EXCELLENT CLIENT! BUT IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE HE'S COME BY, AM I RIGHT?

WELL, THAT'S CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION, BROTHER. WE "PLEAD THE FIFTH." HA, HA, HA!

PARDON MY IGNORANCE OF LEGAL MATTERS... BUT I'M IN A HURRY, AND I KNOW YOU DEALT SEBASTIAN SOME HEROIN... SO, WHERE IS HE?

MY LIPS ARE SEALED, BROTHER!

CRACK!

EEEEEE!!

CRASH!

I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU FOR DAYS... WHO'S THE GUY IN THE MASK?

I DON'T KNOW! HE PAYS WELL, THAT'S ALL...

...AND WE DID WHAT HE TOLD US... WE SOLD SEBASTIAN SOME BAD DOPE!

WHERE IS SEBASTIAN?!

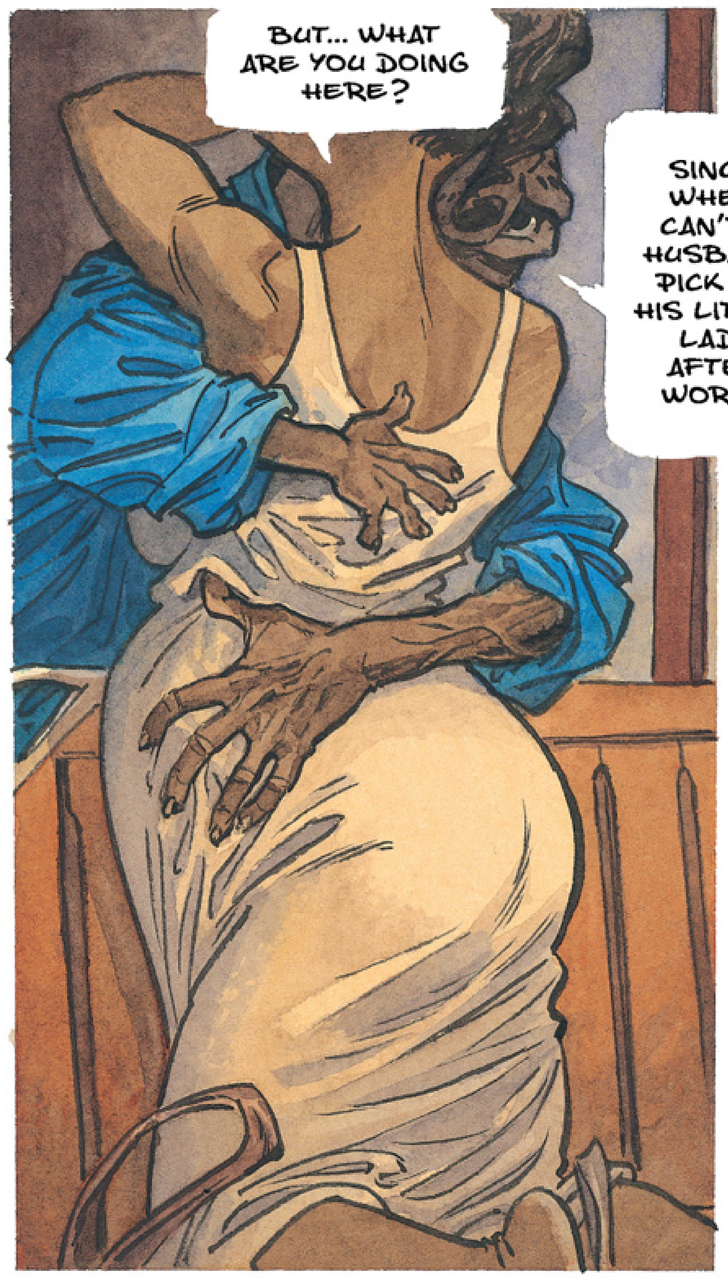
NO IDEA, MAN! MAYBE HE BIT THE DUST... THAT SHIT WE GAVE HIM WAS STRAIGHT RAT POISON...

DO YOU MIND?

11

ST CHARLES
OLD & CROW

HELLO, HANNAH.
OH!
SEBASTIAN!


BUT... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
SINCE WHEN CAN'T A HUSBAND PICK UP HIS LITTLE LADY AFTER WORK?

I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN...
CALM DOWN, BABY. YOU DON'T THINK I COULD RUN OUT ON YOU WHEN YOU'RE IN THIS CONDITION?

YOU HAVEN'T BEEN HOME IN WEEKS... I WAS SURE THAT SOMETHING AWFUL HAD HAPPENED.

WELL, HERE I AM. THIS IS OUR BIG NIGHT, SUGAR. AFTER THE GIG I'LL COME ON HOME, AND WE CAN START ALL OVER AGAIN...

I HAVE SOME GOOD NEWS FOR YOU, TOO, SWEETHEART. FAUST WAS BY THE HOUSE, LOOKING FOR YOU. HE WANTS YOU TO RECORD A NEW ALBUM...

YOU IDIOT! I TOLD YOU NOT TO TALK TO THAT BASTARD EVER AGAIN!

BUT... HE'S A GOOD MAN, AND HE'S BEEN SUCH A BIG HELP TO US... HE JUST WANTS YOU TO FOCUS ON YOUR MUSIC, AND GET OFF THE DOPE...

ALL LIES! IF YOU'RE ON HIS SIDE, YOU JUST FORGET ABOUT ME EVER COMIN' HOME!

SEB!

I'D RATHER HIT UP A MILLION TIMES THAN WORK WITH THAT MONSTER!

SEB, COME BACK!

SEB, NO...!

NOPSI

13

OOF... OOF...

AAAAH...

AAAH...AAH!

AAAAHH!!

AAAAAAH...!

HANNAH!

NO, I'M NOT LOOKING FOR RECORDS BY SEBASTIAN FLETCHER. I'VE GOT THEM ALL. IT'S SEBASTIAN HIMSELF I WANT.

BLUES

BARGAIN

Special! LP 20¢

14

HE HASN'T BEEN HERE IN A LONG TIME...

RCHAPELLE BIG BAND

BARGAIN PRICE

LATELY HE'D RATHER SPEND HIS DOUGH ON DRUGS THAN ON VINYL...

YOU'D BE BETTER OFF ASKING ONE OF HIS DRINKING BUDDIES, LIKE BIG BILL LENOIR.

WHERE CAN I FIND HIM?

?

IT'S A LONG LONG LANE
THAT HAS NO TURNING
AND IT'S A FIRE THAT ALWAYS KEEPS ON BURNING...

YOU JUST DID...

MISTER DEVIL DOWN BELOW
PITCHFORK IN HIS HAND
THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE GONNA GO
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

SHOP

ONE HOUR PARKING

'COS THE DEVIL'S GONNA GET YOU
THE DEVIL'S GONNA GET YOU

YEAH THE DEVIL'S GONNA GET YOU
MAN, AS SURE AS YOU'S BORN!

15

CHEERFUL TUNE.

JUST LIKE LIFE, BROTHER! CAN I INTEREST YOU IN SOMETHING FROM MY CART?

LITTLE BRATS! LEAVE THAT STUFF ALONE!!

I DON'T MEAN TO HOLD YOU UP... I JUST WANTED TO ASK A COUPLE QUESTIONS ABOUT SEBASTIAN FLETCHER...

HEY, BROTHER, I CAN TELL YOU A LOT ABOUT SEBASTIAN! NOT MANY FOLKS KNOW THAT SEBASTIAN, JUNIOR HARPER, POOR JOACHIM, AND I STARTED OUT TOGETHER AS STREET MUSICIANS...

WE MADE OUR INSTRUMENTS OUT OF BOXES, CANS... WHATEVER IT TOOK, MAN! AND WE WOULD'VE GONE FAR, TOO, BUT FOR THE DAMN WAR!

JOACHIM WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO ENLISTED, BUT WHEN HE GOT BACK, HE WASN'T EVER QUITE THE SAME... WHERE'D YOU SAY SEBASTIAN WAS?

I WAS HOPING YOU COULD TELL ME THAT...

HA, HA, HA! THAT DAMN SEBASTIAN! IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I'VE SEEN HIM, BUT IF YOU RUN INTO HIM, YOU TELL HIM NOT TO FORGET OL' BIG BILL LENOIR. YOU TELL HIM TO COME BY AND WE'LL THROW BACK A FEW, JUST LIKE THE GOOD OL' DAYS!

WILL DO.

16

?!

JOE'S BAR

T'IEF, RAB'N! DU'TTY BUZZUT!

STEAD'UH ONNUHRUBBLE WU'K!

CHUPID WAAMENT, WURRUM!

LIFE EVERLASTING
A CHEST RUB MADE BY
DR. DUPRÉ
JUST PUT IT INTO A PILLOW OR SMOKE AS AN INHALANT TO TREAT ASTHMA AND INFLUENZA
DR. DUPRÉ MIRACULOUS FORMULA

?!

IT'S GULLAH, A SOUTHERN DIALECT THEY SPEAK IN CALDONIA.

LENOIR WAS BORN THERE. JUST LIKE JOACHIM, JUNIOR, AND SEBASTIAN. AND MY FATHER, TOO...

JOE'S BAR

MY NAME'S THOMAS. I'M FAUST LACHAPELLE'S SON.

PLEASURE.

DO YOU LIKE CREOLE FOOD? LET ME TAKE YOU OUT TO EAT.

17

I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR FATHER.

THANK YOU. HE'S NOT DOING WELL. I THINK THAT BEING SICK HAS AFFECTED HIS MIND...

... AND THOSE VOODOO TRICKS AREN'T HELPING. THAT OLD HARPY IS PRACTICALLY HOLDING HIM HOSTAGE.

HIS ILLNESS IS BAD NEWS FOR THOSE OF US WHO LOVE JAZZ...

FAUST WAS A MEDIOCRE MUSICIAN, BUT AS A PRODUCER HE HAS A SENSATIONAL KNACK FOR NEW TALENT. IF NOTHING ELSE, HE DESERVES THE HIGHEST RESPECT FOR BRINGING THE WORLD A MUSICAL GENIUS LIKE SEBASTIAN.

THOUGH IT SEEMS LIKE THEIR RELATIONSHIP EXTENDS BEYOND THE STRICTLY PROFESSIONAL...

HE'S BEEN LIKE A FATHER TO SEBASTIAN. AT TIMES I THINK HE SAW HIM AS THE BRILLIANT MUSICIAN THAT HE HIMSELF COULD NEVER BE. BUT GENIUS DOESN'T GIVE YOU CARTE BLANCHE TO ACT LIKE AN IDIOT...

I GET THE SENSE THAT YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY DYING TO FIND OUT WHERE HE IS...

DON'T GET ME WRONG, BLACKSAD. SEBASTIAN AND I HAVE BEEN THROUGH A LOT TOGETHER. HE'S LIKE A LITTLE BROTHER TO ME.

BUT HE DISAPPEARED OF HIS OWN FREE WILL AND ABANDONED HIS PREGNANT WIFE.

18

LOOK, BLACKSAD... MY FATHER ISN'T LONG FOR THIS WORLD. WE NEED EVERY PENNY THE FAMILY HAS, TO COVER HIS MEDICAL TREATMENT.

ARE YOU FIRING ME?

I'M ASKING YOU TO PLEASE DROP THE CASE.

I'M NOT ASKIN' YOU TO *HIRE* ME, CARL. JUST LET ME PLAY TONIGHT!

SEB...

19

I'M SORRY, SEBASTIAN. I LIKE YOU, I'M YOUR BIGGEST FAN, BUT THE LAST TIME YOU WERE HERE, YOU WERE SO STONED YOU COULDN'T STRING TWO NOTES TOGETHER.

BUT I'M *GOOD* NOW! AND I WANNA PERFORM MY NEW PIECE...

IT'S THE BEST MUSIC I'VE EVER WRITTEN! IT'S CALLED "PIZEN BLUES." LOOK, I'VE GOT THE LYRICS RIGHT HERE...

!

I SEE HOW YOU SPENT ALL THE UP-FRONT CASH I GAVE YOU... FORGET IT, SEBASTIAN.

DON'T FUCK ME OVER, CARL! I'VE MADE YOU MORE SCRATCH THAN ANYONE ELSE!

THE WILD NOTE IS WHAT IT IS, THANKS TO THESE HANDS...

OKAY. TONIGHT, AFTER THE SHARKEY QUINTET. BUT PROMISE ME YOU'LL KEEP THAT SHIT FOR AFTERWARDS...

I SWEAR IT, CARL. I SWEAR IT BY MY UNBORN CHILD!

WAAAAAH!

IT'S A BOY!

20

HANNAH, I HAVE TO KNOW IF YOU'VE SEEN SEBASTIAN LATELY. IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH...

I... CONGRATULATIONS.

SHE NEEDS HER REST, BLACKSAD.

DO YOU REALLY THINK THIS IS THE BEST TIME? FOR CHRIST'S SAKE! SHE'S JUST HAD A BABY!

WAAAAH!

DON'T PLAY GOOD SAMARITAN WITH ME, THOMAS! THIS KID'S ABOUT TO BE LEFT WITHOUT A FATHER, AND YOU HAVEN'T LIFTED A FINGER TO FIND HIM!

ONE CAN LIVE WITHOUT A FATHER...

FINALLY, WE SEE THE REAL THOMAS BEHIND THE MASK. THE JEALOUS, ABANDONED SON...

21

WAAAAAH! WAAAAAH!

PLEASE... PLEASE... SEBASTIAN DID COME TO SEE ME. TONIGHT.

HE SAID HE'D BE BACK AFTER HIS SHOW, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE'S PLAYING...

THOUGH THERE IS SOMETHING THAT MIGHT HELP YOU.

IN THE DRAWER...

THEY'RE SONG LYRICS. I DON'T UNDERSTAND THEM. THEY'RE IN THAT DIALECT...

...BUT WHEN I SHOWED THEM TO MONSIEUR FAUST, HE GOT VERY UPSET.

22

WE'RE GONNA TAKE A SHORT BREAK AND BE BACK IN HALF AN HOUR...

YOU PROMISED ME YOU WOULDN'T BUY ANY MORE DRUGS!

HA, HA, HA! I PROMISE!

AND IT'S YOUR FAULT THAT I'M PARANOID! PROMISE ME YOU WON'T EVER DISAPPEAR AGAIN!

THESE ARE THE LYRICS TO A GREAT SONG... "PIZEN BLUES." IT'LL BLOW *EVERYONE'S* MIND WHEN THEY HEAR IT FOR THE FIRST TIME...

HA, HA, HA! YOU MEAN THIS?

SILLY! DON'T MAKE FUN OF ME! I WORRY ABOUT YOU...

IF IT'S A BOY, LET'S CALL HIM JOACHIM.

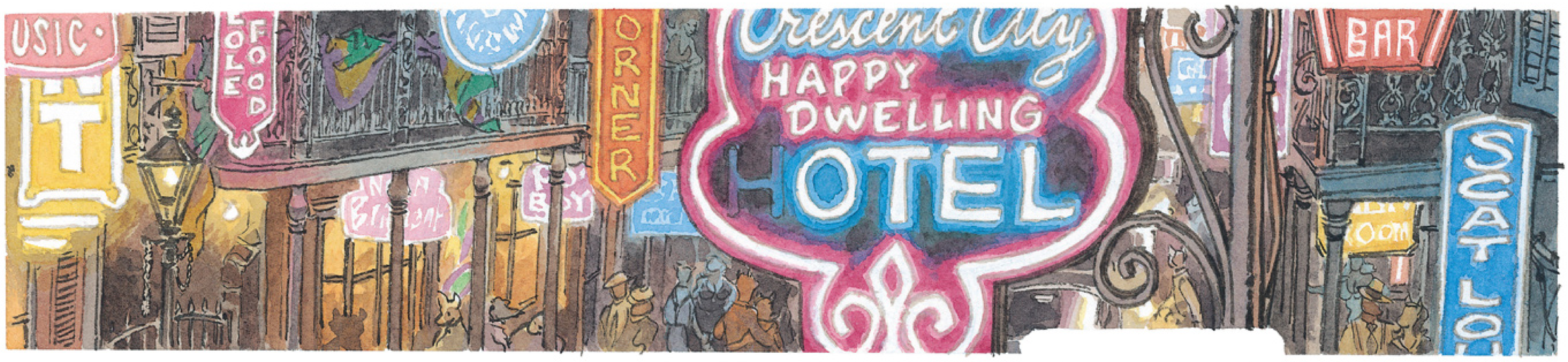
HEY, DON'T LAUGH! JOACHIM'S THE NAME OF MY BEST FRIEND!

JOACHIM WAS A GREAT MUSICIAN! BUT HE DIED A FEW YEARS AGO, OF TUBERCULOSIS. HIS LUNGS NEVER DID WORK TOO WELL...

HA, HA, HA! THAT'S A FUNNY NAME!

OH? I DON'T KNOW HIM...

23


USIC
FOOD
ORNER
Crescent City
HAPPY DWELLING
HOTEL
BAR
SALO

HI, SUGAR. YOU LOOKIN' FOR A GOOD TIME?

C'MON IN, HONEY... YOU COME WITH ME AND I'LL SHOW YOU A COUPLE MAGIC TRICKS...
PLEASE, LADIES, LET ME GO. I'M ON DUTY!

ARE YOU A COP? I THOUGHT I SMELLED SOMETHING!
GO CLEAN YOUR RIFLE SOMEWHERE ELSE, SUGAR!

'SCUSE ME, CHÉRI.

PLOF!
EEEEEE!

AND YOU CAN BET I WON'T GET ANY CREDIT FOR THIS, EITHER!

301
HERE IT IS...

HELLO? JUNIOR HARPER...?

24

ANYONE HERE?

301

OH, MY GOD!

GODDAMN SNITCH! NO NEED TO CALL YOUR LITTLE COP FRIENDS... THEY'RE ALREADY HERE!

BAD NEWS, JOHN. SEEMS HARPER TRIED TO FLY OUT THE WINDOW, BUT FORGOT HE HAD A BUM PAIR OF WINGS...

SUICIDE? I'D SAY MURDER'S MORE LIKELY... HAVE YOU FOUND SEBASTIAN?

NOT YET. BUT NOW I KNOW WHERE TO LOOK. CHECK OUT ALL THE CLUBS THAT HAVE LIVE MUSIC TONIGHT...

OKAY. BUT BE CAREFUL, JOHN. THIS CITY IS QUICKLY LOSING ITS CHARM.

I'M OFF TO SEE FAUST. THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVE TO ASK HIM.

25

PRESIDENT

YOU SHOULD TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOURSELF, DAD, AND STAY IN BED.

NONSENSE... KOF! THE DOCTORS SAID A BIT OF FRESH AIR WOULD DO ME SOME GOOD. HAVE YOU WORKED OUT YOUR PROBLEMS WITH CLAIRE?

COMPLETELY. SHE WANTS A DIVORCE...

AND THE MONEY? AND THE HOUSES?

HERS... AND HER NEW BOYFRIEND'S. ALL I HAVE LEFT ARE THE BILLS...

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME COMING. I'M SORRY...

NO, DAD, THE ONLY THING YOU'RE SORRY ABOUT IS THAT I'LL NEVER GIVE YOU ANY GRAND-CHILDREN...

WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?

26

BECAUSE I'VE HEARD IT OFTEN ENOUGH...

ABOUT AS OFTEN AS I'VE HEARD YOUR STORY OF THE "ABANDONED SON."

LISTEN, PAPA, LET'S BE DONE ONCE AND FOR ALL WITH THESE STUPID FIGHTS. WHY WON'T YOU LET ME HELP YOU? WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME...

RIGHT. I SEE YOU DIDN'T WASTE ANY TIME RUNNING TO CONSOLE SEBASTIAN'S WIFE...

I UNDERSTAND THIS IS A ROUGH PERIOD FOR YOU. IF WHAT YOU WANT IS MONEY...

GOODBYE, DAD.

KOF! KOF! KOF!

27

WEEKLY WAS WRONG. IT'S NOT THAT NEW ORLEANS WAS LOSING ITS CHARM. HE JUST WASN'T LOOKING FOR IT IN THE RIGHT PLACE...

...LIKE THE HOME OF THE DELUSIONAL MADAME GIBRALTAR, FOR INSTANCE, WITH ITS CHARMING SIGHT OF A MAN DYING IN RHYTHM TO AN ABSURD DANCE.

THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY... I'M PARCHED! BRING US A COUPLE OF BOURBONS. WITH LOTS OF ICE. THEN I'LL GO HOME.

I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT THE BALL, MONSIEUR FAUST. I KNOW FOR SURE THAT SOMEONE'S TRYING TO KILL SEBASTIAN, AND I THINK I KNOW WHO IT IS. I NEED YOUR HELP. IT'S ABOUT THAT SONG...

HANNAH SHOWED IT TO ME A FEW DAYS AGO, AND I ADMIT, IT WAS LESS THAN REASSURING...

WHAT DOES *PIZEN BLUES* MEAN?

PIZEN IS "POISON" IN GULLAH.

28

IN MY OPINION, IT'S A REFERENCE TO HEROIN. THE REST OF THE SONG IS A FAREWELL NOTE, FROM A DRUG ADDICT AT DEATH'S DOOR...

WELL, THE BAD NEWS DOESN'T STOP THERE. JUNIOR HARPER JUST DIED, AND YOUR SON WANTS TO FIRE ME. HE BELIEVES THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO INVEST YOUR MONEY.

WHAT?! POOR JUNIOR!

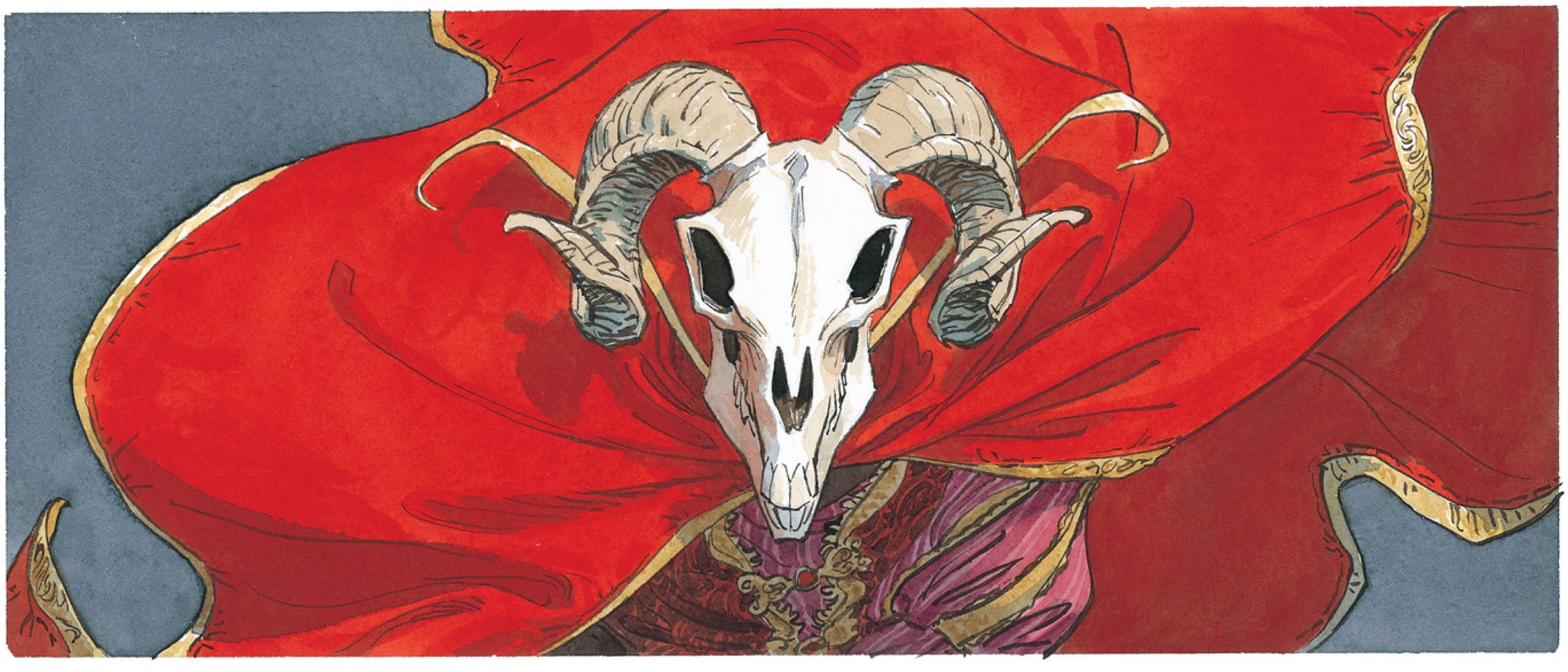
I AM TRULY SORRY, BUT HE AND I HAD GROWN APART THESE PAST FEW YEARS.

AS FOR THOMAS, WHAT I DO WITH MY MONEY IS NOT UP TO HIM.

IN ANY CASE, I AGREE THAT YOU SHOULDN'T SQUANDER IT ON THIS WITCH DOCTOR.

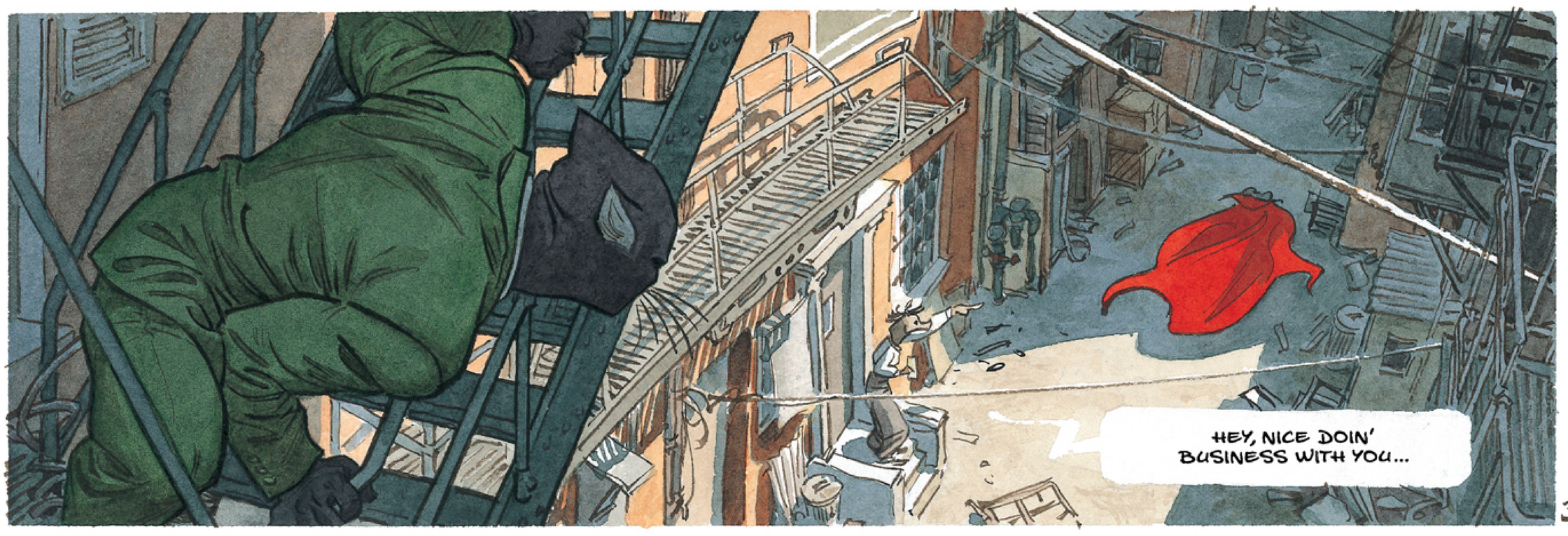
THANKS FOR THE BOURBON.

MARDI GRAS HAD ENDED TWO DAYS EARLIER, BUT I WAS GETTING THE FEELING THAT PEOPLE IN THIS CITY WORE THEIR MASKS ALL YEAR LONG.



WELL, WELL, LOOK AT THIS! DEATH IS HERE IN PERSON TO "UNDERTAKE" A LITTLE BUSINESS...

YOU WANT ME TO GIVE THIS TO "LITTLE HAND"? HE'S ONE OF MY BEST CLIENTS. WHY SHOULD I SHARE HIM WITH YOU, BROTHER?
WELL! THAT'S A FISTFUL OF GOOD REASONS, YESSIR!


HEY, NICE DOIN' BUSINESS WITH YOU...

30

YOU COME BACK ANYTIME! LAISSEZ LES BONS TEMPS ROULER, MAN!

EBONY LOUNGE
ARTISTS' ENTRANCE
-PRIVATE-

31

32

33

THIS MASQUERADE WAS BEGINNING TO MAKE SENSE, AND THE MASKS TO SLIP AWAY. THOMAS LACHAPELLE WAS MORE THAN JUST A JEALOUS SON. HE WAS A BROKEN MAN.

IN HIS DESPERATION, HE PROBABLY HOOKED UP WITH THE MADAME, TO FINISH HIS FATHER OFF QUICKLY.

NEXT ON HIS LIST WAS SEBASTIAN. AFRAID THAT FAUST'S FORTUNE WOULD GO TO THE SURROGATE SON...

...THOMAS DECIDED TO GET RID OF HIS "BROTHER" IN A DEVILISHLY SIMPLE WAY... BY GIVING HIM BAD DOPE.

FOR THE SAME REASON, HE'D MADE HIMSELF INDISPENSIBLE TO HANNAH, SO THAT HE'D BE THE FIRST TO SEE IF SEBASTIAN CAME BACK HOME. OR MAYBE IT WAS JUST HIS WAY OF GETTING REVENGE, OF TAKING WHAT SEBASTIAN LOVED MOST...

HE'D EVEN DECIDED TO GET RID OF ANYONE WHO KNEW HOW TO FIND SEBASTIAN, LIKE JUNIOR...

...OR MYSELF.

WELL, WELL! LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, THESE YANKEES CAN'T HOLD THEIR LIQUOR.

34

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WORSE, LEEMAN: THE DRUG THAT WAS SLIPPED IN MY BOURBON OR THE SMELL OF YOUR DISGUSTING CIGAR...

DON'T WORRY, PAL. AFTER AN INVIGORATING BATH YOU'LL FEEL JUST LIKE NEW...

HOLD IT, LEEMAN. LIKE YOU ALWAYS SAY, WE PROFESSIONALS SHOULD STICK TOGETHER...

AAARGH!!

THAT'S RIGHT, PAL. EXCEPT YOU KNOW THAT REAL PROFESSIONALS ALWAYS FINISH THE JOB.

BLAM BLAM BLAM

GRRRAAAH!

SPLAASHHH

35

BOM

BOM BOM BOM!

AH!!

BOM BOM

SEBASTIAN! WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?!

...

SWINGIN

BOURBON

THE CROWD'S WAITING!

I'M COMIN'!

CLANK

I'M COMIN'!

AH!

38

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

KOF! KOF!

DO CATS *ANYWHERE* LIKE THE WATER...?

WELL, YOU SEEM TO HAVE A CURIOUS TENDENCY TO GET YOURSELF INTO IT...

?

DO WE KNOW EACH OTHER...?

IT'S POSSIBLE. AFTER ALL, WE'RE BOTH CATS...

...WE MUST HAVE CROSSED PATHS IN *ONE* OF OUR NINE LIVES.

39

PHEW... IT'S HOT! BOURBON MILKSHAKE, PLEASE!

DO I LOOK LIKE A MILK COW TO YOU?

UHHH... NO. NO!

I'LL TAKE... WHATEVER YOU GIVE ME. PLEASE!

BOM!

THANKS...

PFFT... THE SAME THING HAPPENED TO ME!

THESE YOKELS DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT A COCKTAIL IS...

ALLOW ME TO JOIN YOU, MAM'SELLE?

ZIP!

HEE, HEE! "MAM'SELLE," HE SAYS... CALL ME ROSE...

ENCHANTÉ, ROSE! MY NAME IS...

...AHEM... =GULP= WEEKLY.

40

WELL, NOW... THAT'S CURIOUS! YOU HAVE THE SAME NAME AS THE WHAT'S NEWS JOURNALIST...

HEEEYY! THAT'S ME!

HEE, HEE, HEE... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

ME NEITHER!

YOU HEAR THE RUMOR, MAN? SEB FLETCHER'S TURNED UP, AND HE'S PLAYING TONIGHT AT THE WILD NOTE...

COOOL! ... I WOULDN'T MISS THAT FOR THE WORLD... LET'S GO!

I HAVE TO LEAVE!!

DEAR GOD IN HEAVEN, WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?

41

THE *WILD NOTE* IS PROUD TO WELCOME BACK SEBASTIAN "LITTLE HAND" FLETCHER, WHO WILL PERFORM HIS NEW SONG, "PIZEN BLUES."

THANK YOU, THANK YOU. THOUGH I AM ONLY 34, YOU CAN SEE THAT I LOOK MUCH OLDER.

I'M A JUNKIE, I DRINK LIKE A FISH, AND I RAN OUT ON MY PREGNANT WIFE...

HA!HA!HA!HA!HA!

PAF!

BUT THAT'S NOTHIN' COMPARED TO THE WORST SIN I'VE EVER COMMITTED. THE SIN OF SILENCE... AND THAT'S WHAT THIS SONG IS ABOUT.

MOST OF YOU WON'T UNDERSTAND THE LYRICS. SO BEFORE I START, I'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU A LITTLE BACKGROUND...

... AND TELL YOU ABOUT THE SONGWRITER, AN HONEST MAN: BIG BILL LENOIR.

42

LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, ONLY FOLKS WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE CAN SLEEP SOUNDLY AT NIGHT. AM I RIGHT, LENOIR?

?

NOT LIKE THAT SCUMBAG LACHAPELLE. THAT FOOL THOUGHT HE COULD REHIRE ME AT TWICE THE PRICE, TO WASH HIS DIRTY LAUNDRY AND GET RID OF A TRAIL OF TROUBLESOME WITNESSES.

BUT THIS TIME HE'S GONE TOO FAR. THOSE LOUSY SECRETS ARE WORTH A LOT MORE... AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT YOUR FRIEND JUNIOR TOLD ME JUST BEFORE HE RUSHED OUT TO GET SOME AIR...

SO BE A NICE BOY AND GIVE ME THE GOODS ON "LIFE EVERLASTING"!

YOU'RE AN ASSHOLE, LEEMAN.

!!!

43

YOU?!

THE GOODS... ARE THE WITNESSES.

SON OF A BITCH!

AARGH!

IN THIS LINE OF WORK, LOGIC IS FAR MORE USEFUL THAN ANY FIREARM.

THE NEXT PERSON ON THE LIST TO BE ELIMINATED WAS LENOIR...

CKRAASH!

AAH!

GRRAAH!

THUMP!!

...FORTUNATELY, I GOT THERE IN TIME...

IDIOT... WE COULD HAVE MADE A KILLING TOGETHER...

...BUT YOU HAD TO GO AND MAKE THIS PERSONAL!

TCHUNK!

AAARGH!

I OWE YOU ONE, PAL.

NOW, TELL ME THE STORY OF DUPRÉ AND THE "PIZEN BLUES"...

LIFE EVERLASTING
A CHEST RUB MADE BY
DR. DUPRE
JUST PUT IT IN
PILLOW OR SMOKE
AN INHALANT TO
ASTHMA
INFLUENZA

45

Lachapelle BIG BAND

HOW DO YOU PICTURE HELL, MR. BLACKSAD? FOR ME IT'S A PLACE WITHOUT MUSIC... TOTALLY SILENT.

THEN LET'S TALK, FAUST. IT'S TIME TO DIG UP THE STORY OF JOACHIM, HARPER, LENOIR, AND SEBASTIAN...

...FOUR CRIPPLED MUSICIANS WHO SHARED A TERRIBLE SECRET. A SECRET THAT GOES BACK SEVERAL DECADES, TO THE SMALL TOWN OF CALDONIA.

STUPID, MEDDLING CAT. YOUR JOB WAS TO FIND SEBASTIAN, CASH YOUR CHECK, AND GET LOST.

AT THIS POINT IN YOUR LIFE YOU SHOULD HAVE LEARNED THAT WORK AND MONEY AREN'T EVERYTHING...

46

"BACK TO CALDONIA, A TOWN SUDDENLY HIT BY A STRANGE PLAGUE, RESULTING IN DOZENS OF DEATHS, MISCARRIAGES...

"...AND BIRTH DEFECTS.

LIFE EVERLASTING A CHEST RUB MADE BY DR. DUPRÉ Just put it into a pillow or smoke as an inhalant to treat ASTHMA AND INFLUENZA

DR DUPRÉ

"HE HAD CONTACTS, AND IT WAS EASY FOR HIM TO CONVINCE A CORRUPT JUDGE TO TURN A DEAF EAR TO AN ILLITERATE, IMPOVERISHED POPULATION."

"THE CAUSE OF THIS CURSE WAS A PRODUCT THAT SEEMED HARMLESS, BUT WHICH PROVED LETHAL. A FLU MEDICINE CALLED 'LIFE EVERLASTING,' MARKETED BY A SCOUNDREL NAMED DUPRÉ.

...THE SURVIVORS OF THAT TRAGEDY WENT THEIR SEPARATE WAYS AND KEPT QUIET, AFRAID OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF THEY BROKE THEIR SILENCE.

ALMOST ALL THEIR CHILDREN WERE BORN WITH PHYSICAL DEFORMITIES, NEVER KNOWIN' WHY. FINALLY, THE WHOLE STORY JUST SORTA FADED INTO THE PAST...

"THE FOUR FRIENDS STAYED TOGETHER FOR A WHILE AND STARTED A STREET BAND, BUT THAT FELL APART WHEN JOACHIM, THE TRUMPET PLAYER, WAS DRAFTED, WITH NO ONE TO TAKE HIS PLACE.

"THE YEARS WENT BY...

"DUPRÉ CHANGED HIS NAME AND BEGAN A CAREER AS A SECOND-RATE BANDLEADER. AFTER THAT FELL APART, HE MOVED TO NEW ORLEANS AND STARTED A SUCCESSFUL RECORD LABEL."

47

FATE LED HIM TO HOOK BACK UP WITH HIS PAST. FIRST CAME JUNIOR HARPER. AN EXCELLENT MUSICIAN, BUT HIS RECORDS WERE NEVER BIG SELLERS.

THEN CAME SEBASTIAN. HE HAD A TALENT SO BRIGHT THAT IT OUTSHONE THE SUN.

AFTER ONLY TWO ALBUMS, HE BECAME LACHAPELLE RECORDS' STAR... AND A HOUSEHOLD NAME IN JAZZ CIRCLES.

"THE PROBLEM STARTED WHEN LENOIR SHOWED UP. HE RAN INTO JOACHIM AFTER THE WAR.

"JOACHIM DIED SOON AFTER. LEGEND HAS IT THAT HE PLAYED THE TRUMPET SO HARD, IT CAUSED HIS LUNGS TO BURST. BUT ACTUALLY THE POISON HAD JUST MANIFESTED ITSELF LATE, IN THE FORM OF LUNG DISEASE.

"BEFORE HE DIED, HE TOLD LENOIR THE TRUTH ABOUT THE POISONING, WHICH HE'D LEARNED FROM AN ARMY BUDDY WHO TURNED OUT TO BE ONE OF THE OLD SURVIVORS FROM CALDONIA."

"...BUT A COUPLE OF WELL-KNOWN MUSICIANS MIGHT HAVE A BETTER SHOT. HE TRIED TO CONVINCE US TO EXPOSE FAUST TOGETHER. JUNIOR, WHO BLAMED FAUST FOR HIS FAILED CAREER, STARTED BLACKMAILIN' HIM.

LENOIR KNEW THAT NOBODY WOULD PAY ATTENTION TO A CRIPPLED BLACK TRAMP...

48

"BUT FAUST NIPPED THAT IN THE BUD, THANKS TO HIS CONTACTS.

"I WAS AFRAID. I JUST LOOKED THE OTHER WAY. I DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE EVERYTHING I'D WORKED FOR... EVEN IF IT WAS BUILT ON THE DEAD BODIES OF MY PEOPLE...

"I TRIED TO DISAPPEAR, TO GET AWAY, TO FORGET, ONLY TO REALIZE THAT YOU CAN PUT YOUR CONSCIENCE TO SLEEP, BUT YOU CAN'T KILL IT..."

Wild Note

...AND THAT'S WHAT THIS SONG IS ABOUT. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FROM BIG BILL LENOIR AND SEBASTIAN FLETCHER: "PIZEN BLUES."

"HOW CAN SOMEONE EATEN UP BY CANCER TREAT OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES SO CHEAPLY? EVEN ON YOUR DEATHBED, CAN'T YOU SUMMON UP A LITTLE COMPASSION, FAUST?"

"I DON'T HAVE CANCER, BLACKSAD. I HAVE A RARE GENETIC DISORDER. THE IRONY OF FATE... MY BLOOD IS POISONED, ROTTEN, LIKE THAT OF MY FATHER, AND MY FATHER'S FATHER. AND PROBABLY LIKE THE BLOOD OF MY SON, THOMAS. I'VE SPENT A FORTUNE TRYING TO FIND A CURE..."

"THAT'S WHY YOU DIDN'T WANT THE 'LIFE EVERLASTING' CASE REOPENED. IF YOU WERE FOUND GUILTY, THE LAWSUITS WOULD RUIN YOU. WELL, IT SEEMS YOUR TIME'S RUN OUT."

49

NO, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND... THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME. I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THOMAS WITH THIS SAD INHERITANCE... OF PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL RUIN.

ISN'T IT A LITTLE LATE TO START WORRYING ABOUT YOUR SON?

IF THE RESEARCH IS SUCCESSFUL, THOMAS CAN SURVIVE AND HAVE HEALTHY CHILDREN. HE'S MY ONLY CHANCE TO CONTINUE THE LINEAGE... MY LEGACY.

A LEGACY HANDED DOWN UNDER A FAKE NAME AND STAINED WITH INNOCENT BLOOD? I HOPE THAT THOMAS HAS OTHER PLANS FOR HIS FUTURE...

JOHN! I FOUND HIM, AT THE WILD NOTE...!

SUMMERTIME, AND THE LIVIN' IS EASY

FISH ARE JUMPIN' AND THE COTTON IS HIGH

YOUR DADDY'S RICH AND YOUR MAMMA'S GOOD LOOKIN'

SO HUSH LITTLE BABY

DON'T YOU CRY

ONE OF THESE MORNINGS YOU'RE GONNA RISE UP SINGING

WILD NOTE

Root beer

CLUB

51

THEN YOU'LL SPREAD YOUR WINGS AND YOU'LL TAKE TO THE SKY

WHITE
COLORED
BUT TILL THAT MORNIN'
THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' CAN HARM YOU

WITH MOMMY...
'N' DADDY...
STANDIN' BY...

52

IT'S OVER. THEY'RE COMING BACK FROM THE CEMETERY.

I'M AFRAID HE'LL NEED IT MORE THAN I WILL...

SIGH!

ARE YOU STILL SULKING OVER THAT "ROSE"? I THINK SHE WAS A HALLUCINATION. IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE IN SUCH A PERFECT GIRL...

JUST AS HARD TO BELIEVE YOU GAVE THE MONEY BACK TO THAT THOMAS...!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? HE'S GOING TO INHERIT A HUGE FORTUNE!

53

IT'S A LONG STORY... LET'S JUST SAY HIS LIFE'S IN DANGER AND HE'S GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP HE CAN GET...

JACQUOT'S BRASS

HA! LOOK WHO'S TALKING! IN JUST ONE NIGHT YOU WERE ALMOST DROWNED, THEN STRANGLED...

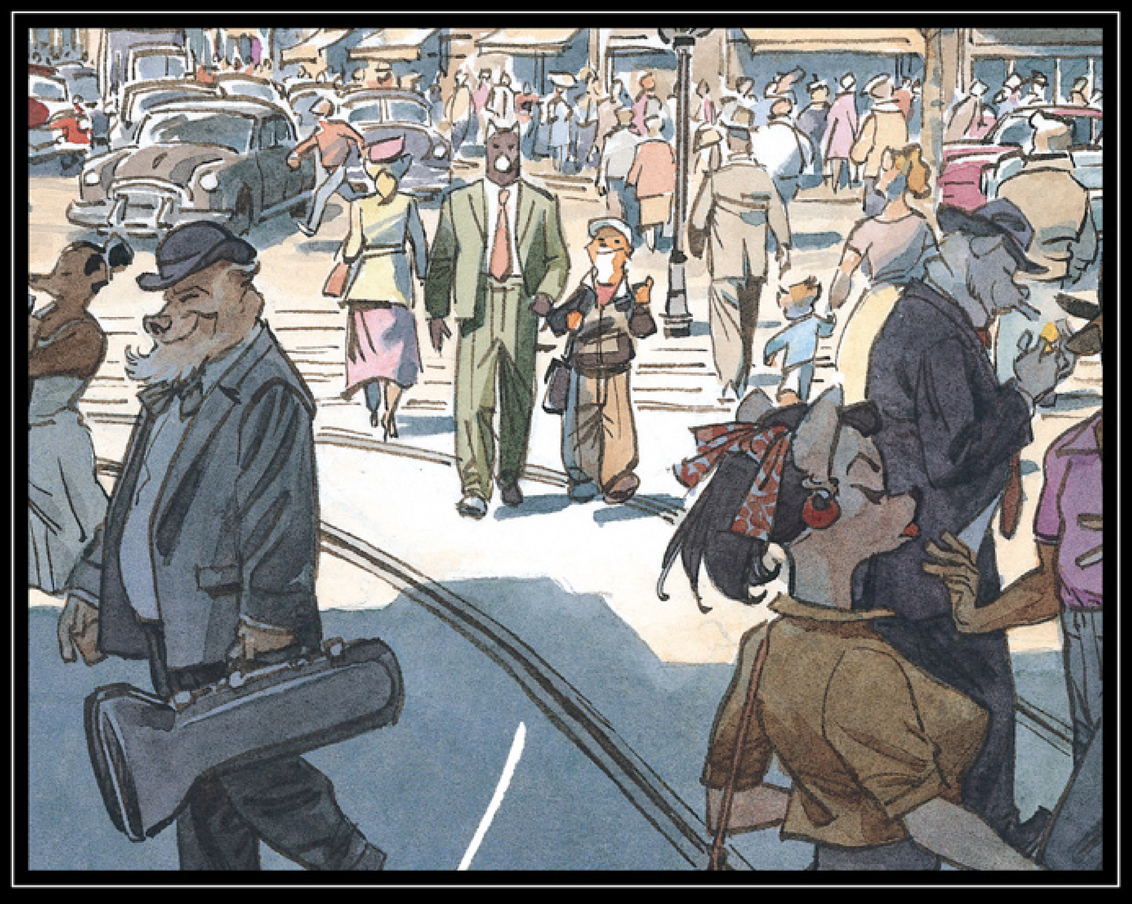
IT'S NOT THE SAME, WEEK. IT'S NOT THE SAME...

SAYS THE TOUGH GUY! YOU'D THINK YOU HAD A GUARDIAN ANGEL...

END
OF EPISODE

54

JUAN DÍAZ CANALES & JUANJO GUARNIDO
2010



AMARILLO

Written by

JUAN DIAZ CANALES

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Lettering by

TOM ORZECHOWSKI AND LOIS BUHALIS

AAAAHH!

ARGLLL!!

GLUBB! GLLL!!

Highway Star MOTEL

POOL

GLUB... BLUB...

1

AAH!

SO, TELL ME: **WHO** IS THE **GREATEST POET** OF ALL TIME? YOU'VE GOT EXACTLY **ONE** GUESS...

YOU! ABRAHAM GREENBERG!

NO, YOU IGNORANT PIECE OF SHIT! **ARTAUD** IS THE GREATEST!

GLUB!

YOU WANNA TALK ABOUT WHO'S **CRAZIER,** THEN YOU'RE RIGHT: ARTAUD'S GOT YOU BEAT. THOUGH NOT BY MUCH...

BUT AS A **WRITER,** YOU'RE THE **BEST,** ABE. A BONA FIDE POETIC **GENIUS.**

"IT HAS NOT BEEN DEFINITIVELY PROVED THAT THE LANGUAGE OF WORDS IS THE BEST POSSIBLE LANGUAGE."

YOUR WORDS ARE. NO DOUBT ABOUT IT: YOUR NEXT BOOK, THE ONE YOU'RE HOLDING, IS GONNA BE A **CLASSIC.** IT JUST NEEDS TO SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY...

MY **DEAR** CHAD... MY POEMS DON'T "SEE THE LIGHT." THEY **ARE** THE LIGHT...

THE **WORDS** ENLIGHTEN AND SHOW US THE WAY...

NO--! YOU'RE FREAKIN' INSANE!

I DON'T PLAN TO LET **ANY** OF MY VERSES END UP IN THE SLIMY HANDS OF THOSE **BUTCHERS** WHO PASS THEMSELVES OFF AS **EDITORS.**

IF YOU LIKE, WE CAN ALSO **PURIFY** THIS SCROLL YOU CALL A **NOVEL...**

DON'T EVEN **THINK** ABOUT IT! THAT'S **TWO YEARS** OF MY WORK!

"WORK"? I'M TALKING TO YOU ABOUT **POETRY** AND **REVELATION** AND THE TRUTH THAT **BLINDS,** AND YOU TALK ABOUT "**WORK**"?

IT SEEMS THE SUCCESS OF YOUR FIRST BOOK HAS KNOCKED YOU OFF THE **PATH.**

NO **GUTS,** NO **GLORY,** CHAD. GIVE YOUR STORY A HAPPY ENDING FOR ONCE, AND LEAVE THAT ROLL OF PAPER IN SOME **TOILET,** WHERE PEOPLE CAN PUT IT TO GOOD USE.

MOISANT FIELD.
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA.

NO, I NEVER DID FIND **ROSE.** YOUR **BAD LUCK** MUST BE CONTAGIOUS...

3

...AND MY BOSS WANTS ME BACK IN THE OFFICE, SO I **CAN'T** STICK AROUND NEW ORLEANS ANY LONGER. ARE YOU STILL THINKING OF STAYING?

NO CHOICE. I COULD USE A CHANGE OF SCENERY, BUT I'M FLAT BROKE.

TURNS OUT, MY BOSS ISN'T AS **FLUSH** AS YOURS.

HEY, I ALREADY SAID I'D LEND YOU MONEY FOR A FLIGHT, IF YOU WANT...

THANKS, **WEEK,** BUT I'D RATHER GET BACK WITH MY FEET ON THE **GROUND.**

I'LL JUST TRY TO FIND A NICE, QUIET JOB HERE, WHERE I DON'T HAVE TO DODGE BULLETS AND NOBODY WINDS UP DEAD... FOR A CHANGE.

ALL THAT HARD LUCK ON MY TAIL IS STARTING TO WEAR ME DOWN.

YOU COULD ALWAYS CHANGE CAREERS...

I WONDER SOMETIMES IF I SHOULDN'T HAVE CONTINUED THE FAMILY TRADITION AND BECOME A **PHOTOG,** LIKE MY GRANDFATHER.

4

THAT'S IT! YOU'D BE A GREAT PHOTOGRAPHER. YOU'RE A **QUICK SHOT,** AND YOU KNOW HOW TO BE IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME. ALL YOU NEED IS A **CAMERA...**

...AND HERE YOU GO. **KEEP** IT. MAYBE YOU'LL FIND YOUR TRUE CALLING.

NO! NO SHOOTING, PERIOD! I'LL BE HAPPY IF YOU JUST WATER MY PLANTS TILL I GET HOME.

AND SPEAKING OF QUICK... BETTER **RUN,** OR YOU'LL MISS YOUR PLANE.

?

THAT DAMN WEEKLY...

5

'SCUSE ME. YOU DROPPED YOUR WALLET.

HEY, PARDNER, THANKS A LOT!

NO PROBLEM.

BAF!

THAT WAS A LUCKY BREAK, PARDNER. I **OWE** YOU ONE! ANYTHING I CAN **DO** FER YOU?

I **AM** LOOKING FOR WORK.

HOW ABOUT THAT! WELL, IF YOU KNOW HOW TO **DRIVE,** YOU JUST FOUND YOURSELF A JOB!

WELL, IF YOU KNOW HOW TO **PAY,** YOU JUST FOUND YOURSELF A DRIVER. AS LONG AS I DON'T HAVE TO KILL OR BEAT UP ANYONE.

HA HA HA! WELL, YOU MUSTA NOTICED THAT I'M NOT HURTIN' FER CASH. LOOK...

...THERE'S A FLIGHT I **GOTTA** CATCH, AND I NEED SOMEONE TO DRIVE MY CAR BACK TO MY HOUSE IN TULSA...

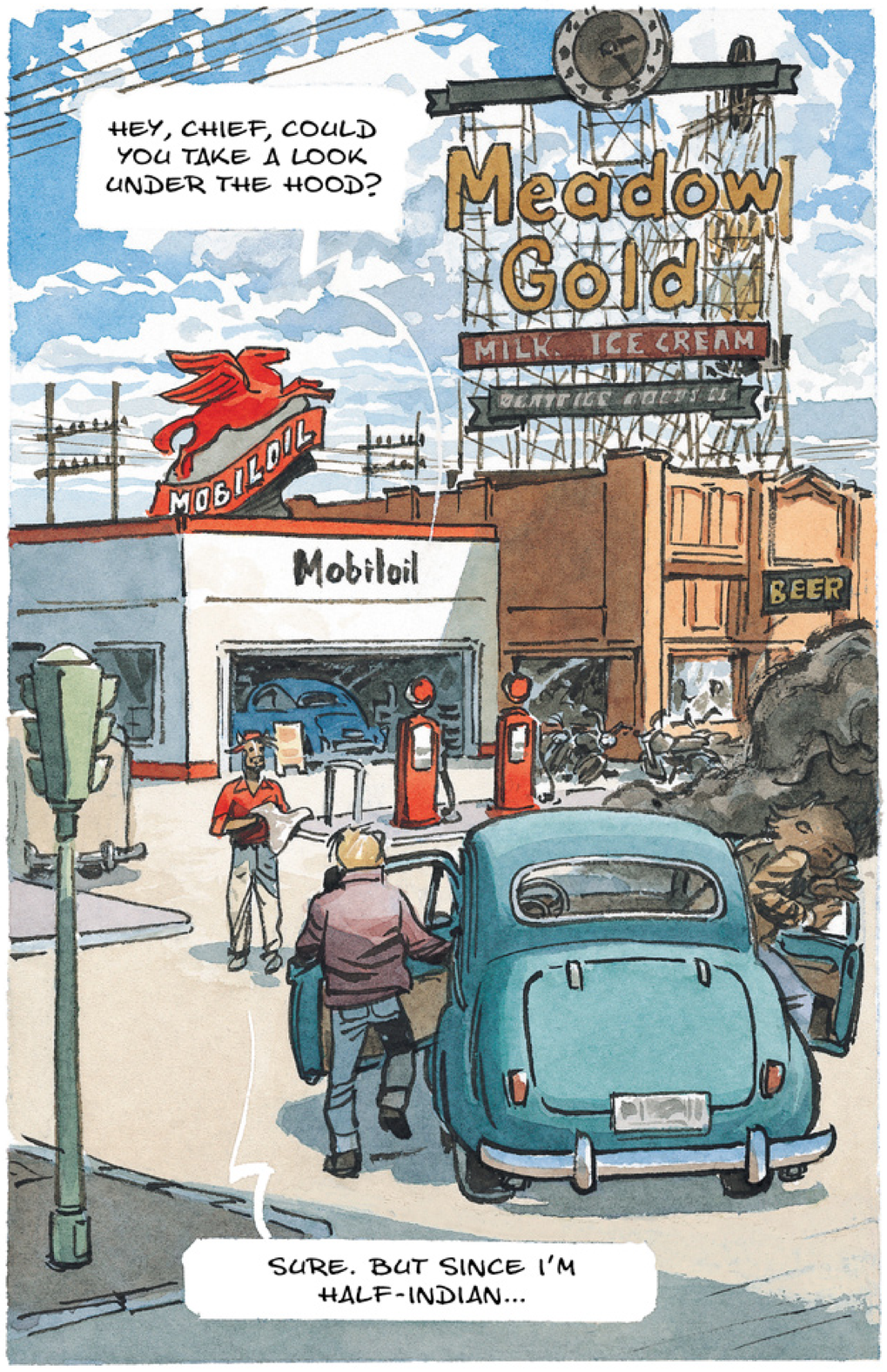
YA SEEM LIKE A STRAIGHT SHOOTER, SON--THE KIND WHO STAYS OUTTA TROUBLE.

THAT'S SOME EYE YOU'VE GOT... I'LL TAKE THE JOB.

Eldorado

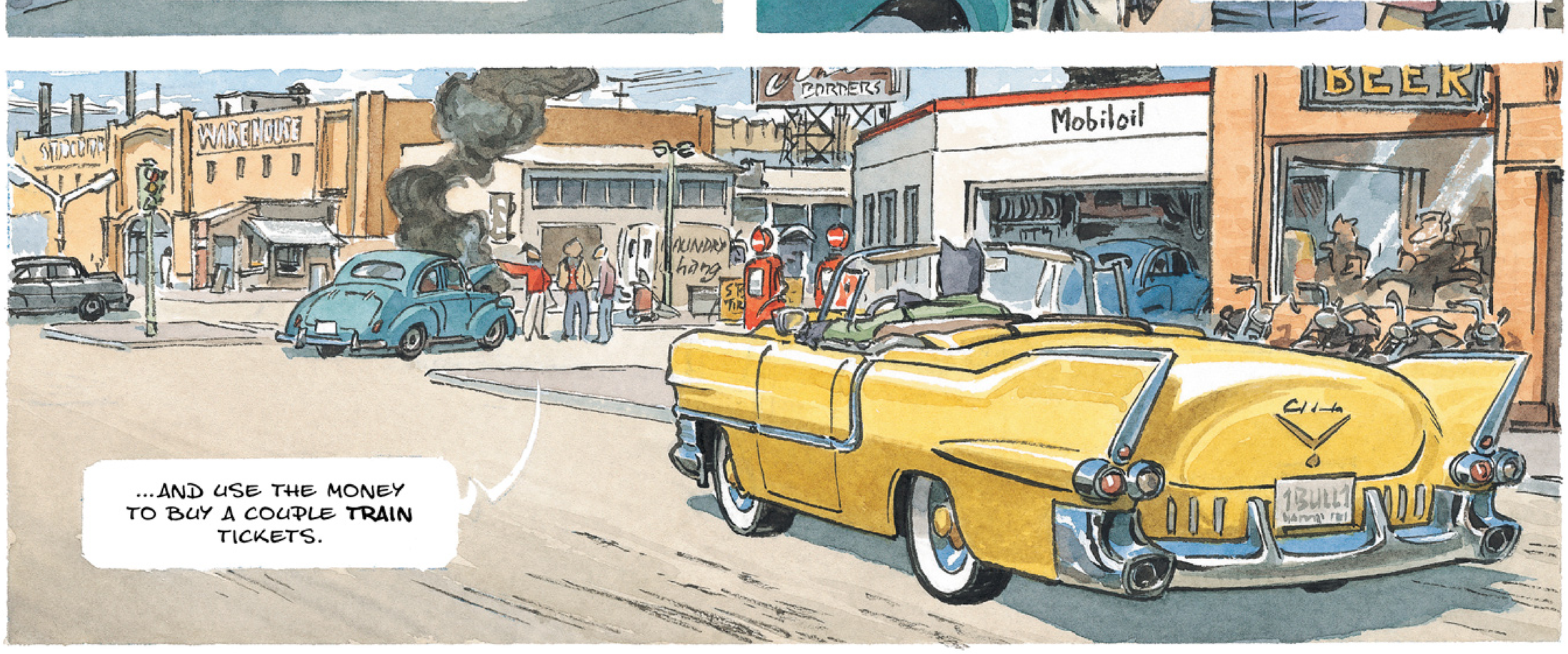
6

ROUTE 66
WHEEEEE!
BETTY'S MOTEL
EAT AT JOE'S
DRUGSTORE
TULSA, OKLAHOMA.


HEY, CHIEF, COULD YOU TAKE A LOOK UNDER THE HOOD?
Meadow Gold
MILK. ICE CREAM
MOBILOIL
Mobiloil
BEER
SURE. BUT SINCE I'M HALF-INDIAN...

...I CAN PRETTY MUCH READ WHAT THOSE SMOKE SIGNALS HAVE TO SAY...
LET IT BLEAT

...AND THEY'RE TELLING ME THIS PIECE O' JUNK IS DEAD. BETTER TO SELL IT FOR SCRAP...


WAREHOUSE
BORDERS
Mobiloil
BEER
...AND USE THE MONEY TO BUY A COUPLE TRAIN TICKETS.

7

HEY, ABE. GRAB OUR STUFF AND GET READY TO ROLL...

'KAY!

VRROOMM!

?!

WHAT THE HELL--?!

MY BIKE! ASSHOLES!

BEER!

SLICK MOVE, CHAD!

?!

SHITHEADS!

OUCH!

SCKEEEEE!

ARGH!

TAKE 'EM OUT, GOLD MEDAL! THEY GOT IT COMIN'!

CLANG!

GUT THOSE BASTARDS!

HAVE YOU TWO **NOT** FIGURED OUT THAT PRIVATE PROPERTY IS **SACRED** IN THIS COUNTRY?

JUST AS SACRED AS LAW AND ORDER...

AND WHO THE FUCK ARE **YOU?** CLARENCE THE GUARDIAN ANGEL?

CLOSE ENOUGH. POINT IS, YOU KEEP THIS UP AND COPS WILL BE ALL OVER THE PLACE.

BRING THE COPS... THEY CAN EXPLAIN TO THESE TWO LITTLE THUGS THAT STEALING MOTORCYCLES IS AGAINST THE LAW! AND LAWS ARE THERE TO BE **OBEYED.**

GOT IT... AGREED.

SO TELL YOUR AMIGOS HERE TO CHILL OUT, AND **NOT** TO MURDER THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS.

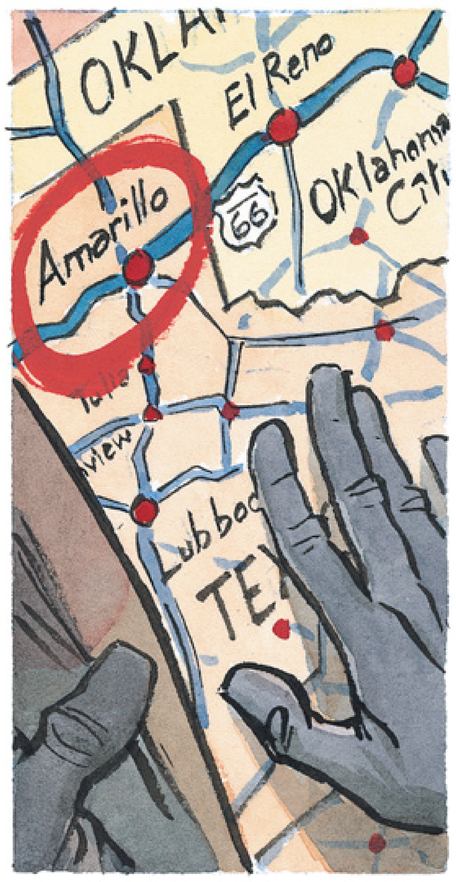
VRROOOOMM!

LET IT BEAT

OH, SHIT.

I **TOLD** YA, CLARENCE! PUNKS LIKE THAT GOT **NO** RESPECT FOR NOTHIN'.

9


El Reno
Amarillo
66

Y'SEEM LIKE AN ALL-RIGHT TYPE, CLARENCE... AN' YA TOOK A STIFF ONE.

IF YOU NEED TO GET TO **AMARILLO,** MAYBE I CAN HELP YOU.
YOU LOOKING TO EARN **YOUR** "ANGEL WINGS," TOO?

HA, HA, HA! NOT ME, DUDE. I'VE GOT MY BIKE IF I REALLY WANNA FLY. BUT CHUCK CAN LEND YOU **HIS.** HE WON'T BE ABLE TO RIDE FOR A FEW DAYS.

THANKS, GOLD MEDAL. YOU'RE AN ALL-RIGHT TYPE YOURSELF.

AMARILLO, TEXAS.

HIT THAT JIVE, JACK ♪♫ PUT IT IN YOUR POCKET TILL I GET BACK ♪♫

GOING DOWNTOWN TO SEE A MAN

AND I AIN'T GOT TIME TO SHAKE YOUR HAND...

I'M TELLIN' YOU, I NEVER HIT THE PAVEMENT WITHOUT **BIG SISTER** HERE. AMARILLO'S STREETS CAN BE MIGHTY DANGEROUS: THEY'RE CRAWLING WITH **COPS.**

GOOD OL' **BILLY SORROWS.** YOU'RE MORE AFRAID OF THE **LAW** THAN ANY ACT OF GOD...

WITH GOOD REASON! YOU CAN'T TRUST THOSE DAMN FLATFEET. THEY'RE JUST PLAIN **RATS:** NO TASTE, NO ARTISTIC SENSIBILITY. AND LIKE RATS, THEY'RE **EVERYWHERE...**

SEE THAT CREEP? I'M SURE HE'S A COP. AN' HE HAS TO **DIE** BEFORE SUNUP...

YOU GOT ANY **GUTS,** KID?

PLENTY. BUT A LOUSY AIM.

11

IN FACT, CHAD, YOU DON'T HAVE **EITHER**...

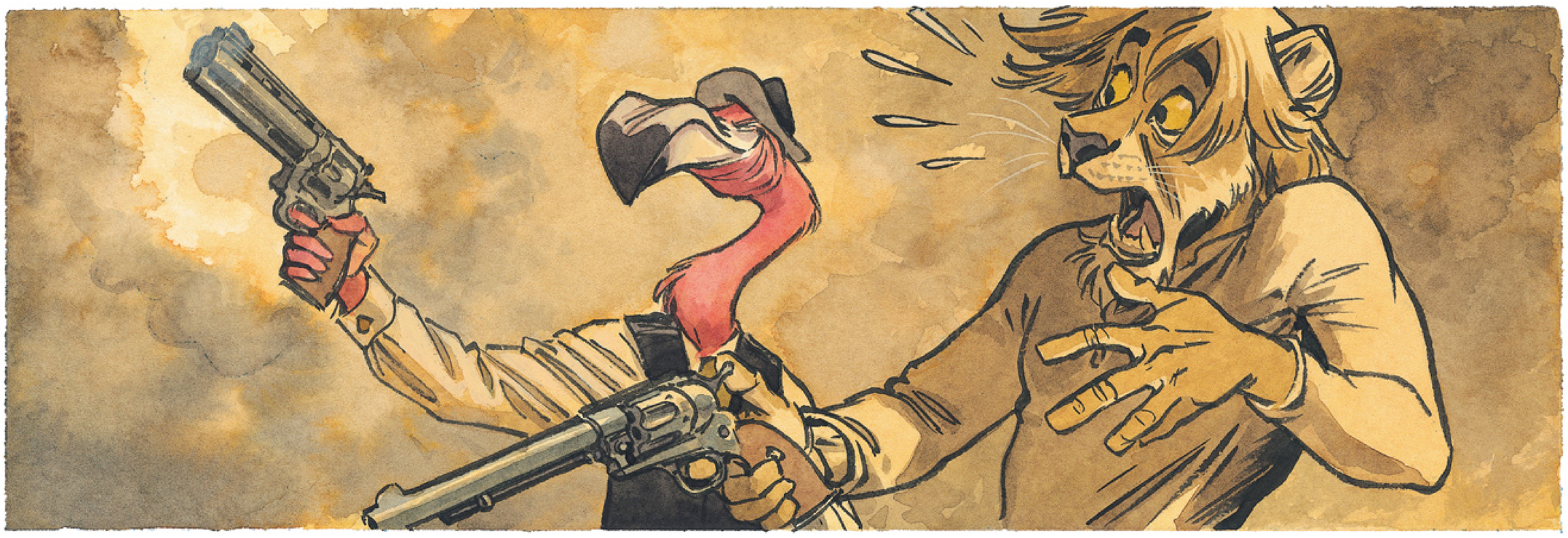
NEVER BELIEVE WHAT COMES OUT OF THE MOUTH OF A GUY WHO PUTS A **PRICE TAG** ON HIS OWN WORDS.

OKAY. LET'S SEE WHICH ONE OF YOU IS **LYING**...

SHOOT.

BLAM

12



THIS... THIS IS STUPID.
CLAP CLAP CLAP
NO CALCULATED ACT OF VIOLENCE IS MEANINGLESS. IT'S COWARDICE AND STAGNATION THAT **ROT** A MAN'S SOUL.

IF YOU WANT TO BE A **REAL** WRITER SOMEDAY, YOU'D BETTER **FACE** THAT!

WHO'S NEXT?

13

JAMES

YOU PLANNING TO STAY IN AMARILLO A WHILE?
UNTIL MY AGENT GETS HERE FROM L.A. I'M MEETING WITH HIM...

...TO HAND OVER THE MANUSCRIPT OF MY NEXT NOVEL.
WELL THEN, PAL, YOU'D BETTER GET PACKING...

...SINCE YOUR NOVEL'S ALREADY ON ITS WAY TO TIBET...
...I WRAPPED UP THE SCROLL AND MAILED IT TO THE DALAI LAMA...
ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

NO, BRO. DIG IT! I FIGURE HE'S THE ONLY PERSON IN THE WORLD WHO CAN PUT YOU BACK ON THE PATH OF LIGHT AND REDEMPTION.
THAT SCROLL... WAS... MY LIFE'S WORK!
ADMIT IT, CHAD. YOU JUST DON'T HAVE THAT LYRIC SENSE...

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU, TO JUDGE ME? WHAT'VE YOU GOT THAT MAKES YOU ANY BETTER THAN ME?

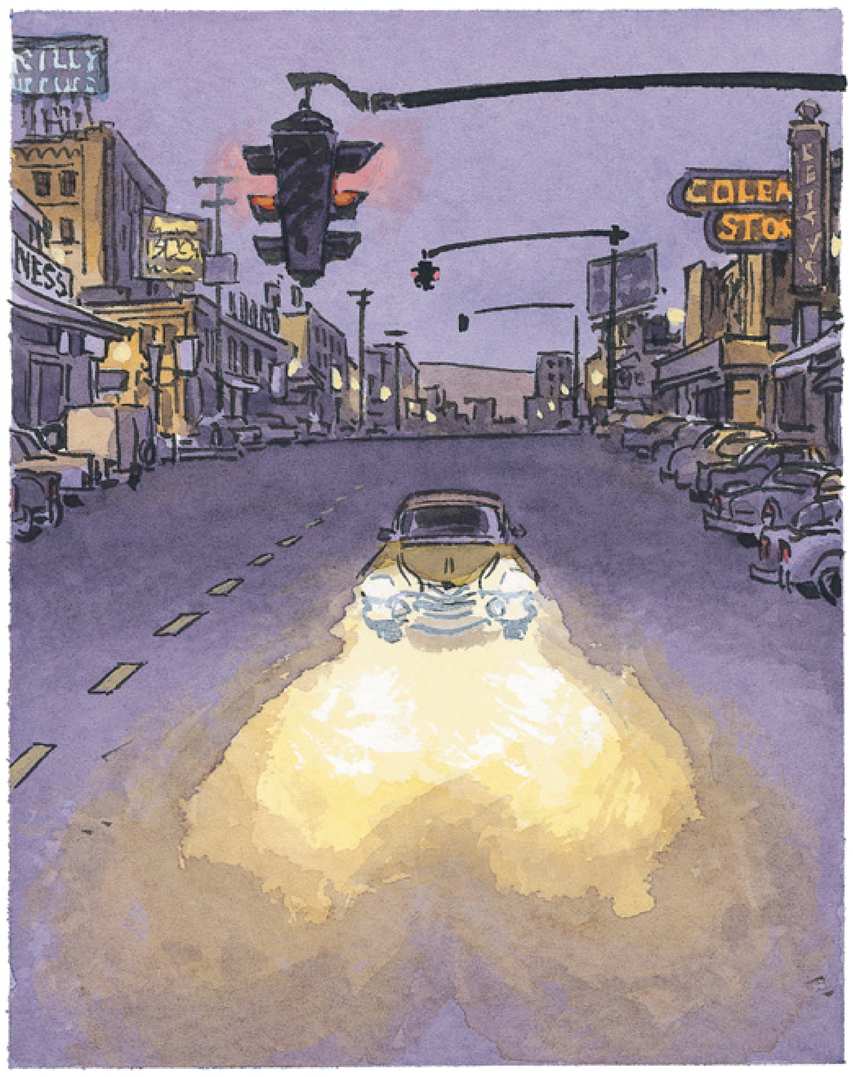
POETRY. AND BALLS.

OKAY, FINE. WE'LL FIX THAT FIRST!

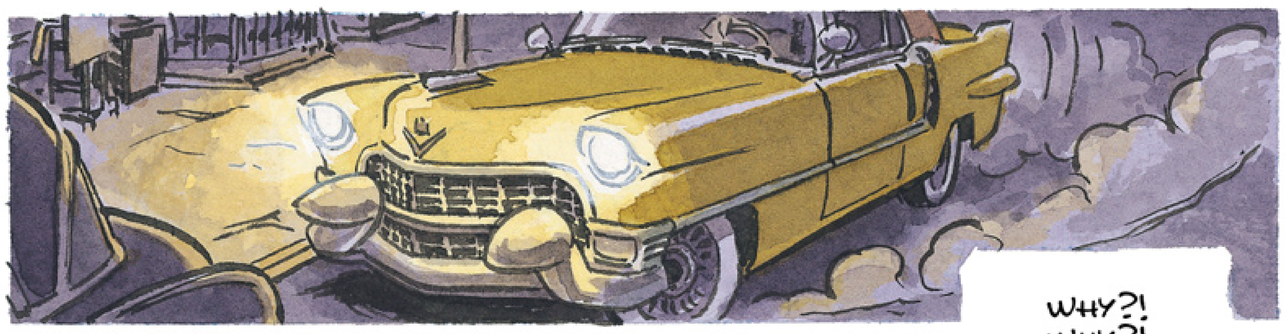
BLAMMM!

YOU GONNA **HELP** ME WITH THIS, OR WOULD YOU RATHER WE WRITE A FUCKING **SONNET** ABOUT IT?

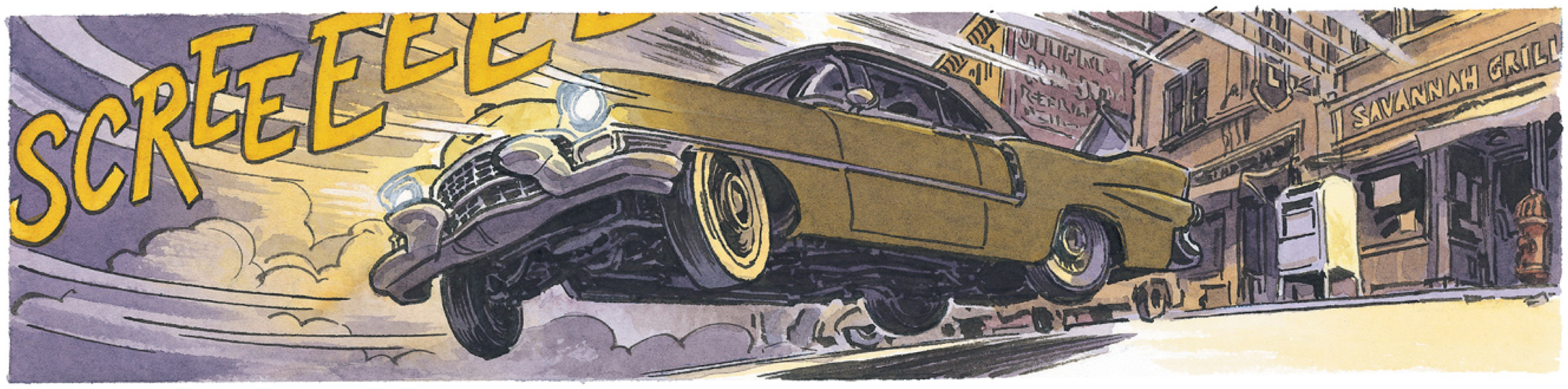
15



WHY, ABE?



WHY?!
WHY?!
WHY?!
BONK
BONK
BONK


SCREEEEE
SAVANNAH GRILL

CRASH!

CRASH
SMASH
CRASH

16

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO.

MAD

AHA INTERE MUCH MOR CHARACTER

HA, HA, HA! THIS KURTZMAN GUY'S A RIOT!

YOU LOOK LIKE AN IDIOT. READING COMIC BOOKS AT YOUR AGE...

HEH, HEH, HEH!

BAF!

HERE'S OUR NEW "CASE"!

WHEN WILL WE EVER GET OUT OF THIS SHITHOLE?

LIGHTEN UP! ACCORDING TO THIS, WE GOTTA HIT THE ROAD. TO TEXAS-- AMARILLO. IT'S A CASE OF...

..."DESTRUCTION OF A U.S. MAILBOX." A WHOLE CAREER IN THE FBI JUST TO WIND UP RESCUING SOME HICK TOWN'S POSTCARDS... FUCKIN' HUMILIATING!

C'MON. SOONER WE GET GOING, SOONER WE'RE DONE!

I'D GIVE MY EYETEETH TO NAIL THAT GODDAMN CAT...*

TALES GHAST

17

* SEE RED SOUL, FROM BLACKSAD VOL. 1

AMARILLO, TEXAS.

I GOTTA GO FILE A STOLEN CAR REPORT. ONE OF THOSE HIPSTERS LOOKED ODDLY FAMILIAR TO ME--COULD BE A LEAD TO THE CAR. YOU WANNA COME?

NO WAY, AMIGO! I'M A LAW-ABIDING CITIZEN AND ALL, BUT THE **FUZZ** AND I DON'T EXACTLY SEE EYE TO EYE.

THEN HERE'S WHERE WE PART WAYS. THANKS, GOLD MEDAL.

LOTSA LUCK, CLARENCE!

GORGEOUS. THE FLOWER **AND** YOU.

18

HAVE YOU PERCHANCE SEEN A HANDSOME YOUNG **LION** HEREABOUTS?

NO. I'M SURE I'D HAVE NOTICED.

OF COURSE, NOT THAT HE'S AS GOOD-LOOKING AS **I** AM, BUT...

LET ME **GO,** YOU FREAKIN' TOADIES!

YOU GOT IT.

HEY!

BONK BONK BONK

OWW!

OUCH

YOWCH

NOW QUIT STIRRING UP SHIT, OR WE'LL TOSS YOU BACK IN LOCKUP **ANOTHER** NIGHT.

HEH, HEH!

THAT WAS AN ACTIONABLE ABUSE OF YOUR RIGHTS, DEAR SIR...

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF: **NEAL BEATO,** ATTORNEY. IF YOU WANT TO FILE A POLICE BRUTALITY CHARGE, I'LL BE HAPPY TO HANDLE IT FOR YOU.

THANKS, BUT WHAT I REALLY **NEED** IS A DRINK. THOSE DICKS LEFT ME **DRY** THE **WHOLE** NIGHT.

AAAND... NOW YOU'RE TALKIN'!

MY NAME'S **FILIPE PAPALEGUAS,** BUT YOU, MY NEW FRIEND, CAN CALL ME **PHIL.** I'M A STAGEHAND AT THE **SUNFLOWER CIRCUS...**

OR... I **WAS,** UNTIL THEY FIRED ME FOR DRINKING. CAN YOU **BELIEVE** THAT?

I **CAN!** WRONGFUL TERMINATION. WITH AN AGGRESSIVE DEFENSE...

AGGRESSIVE? I COULDA USED THAT **YESTER-DAY,** TO BREAK THE LEGS OF THAT **BUM** THEY HIRED TO REPLACE ME! SOME SCRUFFY-LOOKIN' BEATNIK LION.

WAIT, WHERE **IS** THAT CIRCUS? IF IT'S THE LION I'M THINKING OF, I CAN **HELP** YOU BREAK HIS LEGS...

...FOR FREE.

IT SEEMS WE HAVE A DILEMMA: THREE PLAINTIFFS BUT ONLY **TWO** LEGS TO BREAK. WHERE'S THIS **SUNFLOWER CIRCUS** SET UP, MY DEAR PHIL?

TOO LATE FER THAT, NEW PAL. THEY FOLDED THE TENT AND SHOULD BE MOVING ON TO THEIR NEXT GIG... WHICH IS... UM... DENVER.

NEAL BEATO. ATTORNEY-AT-LAW AND LITERARY AGENT FOR **CHAD LOWELL,** OUR INFAMOUS LION ON THE RUN.

VERY CONVENIENT. YOU CAN START REHEARSING YOUR ARGUMENTS IN HIS DEFENSE FOR GRAND THEFT AUTO...

... A **FELONY.**

MOST ASSUREDLY. MY CARD?

NO THANKS. WHAT I NEED IS TRANSPORT TO DENVER. DO YOU HAVE A **CAR?**

ARE YOU KIDDING? I CAN GET **ANY-THING** WITH A SIMPLE FLICK OF MY WRIST...

20

CHAD'S A GOOD KID. OF COURSE, I'M A FAMILY FRIEND. KNOWN HIM FOR YEARS...

HE HAS A LOT OF TALENT, BUT HE CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TO COPE WITH IT. HE HAD A REAL SURPRISE SUCCESS WITH HIS FIRST NOVEL, MORE SO THAN ANY OTHER WRITER OF HIS GENERATION.

IRONICALLY, IT'S PLUNGED HIM INTO A SEA OF **DOUBT.** HE CAN'T SEEM TO JUDGE WHAT'S **GOOD** OR WHAT'S **BAD** ANYMORE...

SO THIS IS WHERE **YOU** SHOW UP TO SAY THAT PUBLISHING HIS NEW BOOK IS WHAT'S GOOD... AND THEN PROCEED TO **CASH IN,** RIGHT?

WHO IN THE WORLD DOES **NOT** NEED MONEY? IF YOU HELP ME FIND HIM, I CAN GIVE YOU A PIECE.

I JUST WANT HIM TO RETURN THE CAR AND TELL THE OWNER WHAT HAPPENED...

THE REST IS **YOUR** BUSINESS.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR STOPPING. WE'RE HEADING ALL THE WAY TO DENVER...

WELLLLL... THAT'S SOME COINCIDENCE, BOYS! 'CAUSE I'M ON MY WAY TO THE COLORADO HOME 'N' GARDEN SHOW... IN **DENVER.**

PERFECT. A LITTLE **LUCK** FOR ONCE.

VROOOOOM

21

DENVER, COLORADO.

CHAMALO THE RAINBOW

SHEESH COBRA THE ARMLESS HYPNOTIST FROM INDIA

MR. TATOU NATURAL BODY ARMOR

AMENOPHYS SKINNED CAT

KUMA THE GIANT & ZAP THE TINY

BLIN Smells GLA

CROSSBOW BILLY

22

!!

WHAT'LL YOU **GIVE** ME IF I CAN READ WHAT'S INSIDE YOUR HEAD...?

PLEASE DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME. WHAT'S **OUTSIDE** MY HEAD IS **WAY** MORE INTERESTING...

I'M JUST HOPELESS! I'LL **NEVER** MAKE IT AS A FORTUNE-TELLER... THAT MUCH I CAN ALREADY SEE.

PRINCESS TUPTIM THE SIAMESE MENTAL MARVEL

OOPS, SORRY...

DON'T SWEAT IT. THAT GIG WASN'T **MY** IDEA. I'D JUST AS SOON STAY **BEHIND** THE CURTAIN.

I WON'T TELL A SOUL. I KNOW HOW TO KEEP A SECRET.

POK

SURE YOU DO! I CAN READ IT IN YOUR MIND!

DIG YA LATER...

!!

SHE'S ONE **CUTE** LITTLE KITTY-CAT, AIN'T SHE?

THAT'S **LUANNE**, TCHANG'S ASSISTANT. TCHANG THE **KNIFE-THROWER.**

AN' YOU DON'T BE THINKIN' NOTHIN' ABOUT HER...

...'CAUSE I'VE HAD MY EYE ON HER... FOR A LONG TIME.

HA! HA! HA!

AMARILLO, TEXAS.

THAT RUINED MAILBOX HAD FLECKS OF YELLOW PAINT ON IT: THIS PAINT! WHICH LED ME TO FURTHER DEDUCE THAT THIS ABANDONED CADILLAC MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE MAILBOX INCIDENT.

WE DIDN'T COME ALL THE WAY TO HELL AND GONE TO HEAR YOUR DEDUCTIONS, LITTLE DOGIE. DEDUCING IS FBI WORK.

WHO'S THE OWNER OF THE CAR, DO YOU KNOW?

NO... WE WERE INSTRUCTED NOT TO TOUCH ANYTHING UNTIL YOU ARRIVED. BESIDES, IT SEEMS I DON'T ACTUALLY MAKE DEDUCTIONS.

HEY! GIMME A HAND WITH THE TRUNK.

!!

UGGHH. GRUESOME... THIS GUY'S PULP! WE'LL NEVER IDENTIFY HIM BY WHAT'S LEFT OF HIS FACE.

YEAH... BUT HIS HEART WAS BROKEN BEFORE THE FACELIFT. SOMEBODY BLEW HIS CHEST INTO HIS SPINE.

LOOK, ANOTHER SURPRISE: A RAINCOAT...

...AND A WALLET!

GOOD, LET'S SEE IF WE CAN PUT A FACE TO THE BODY IN THE TRUNK...

24

?!

FBI

50 STATE OF NEW YORK AUTO DRIVERS' LICENSE

WELL... **HEL-LO,** OLD PAL! NAH... THIS CAT'S NOT OUR **STIFF,** NOT THAT I'D MIND.

BUT NOW WE HAVE A FIRST-CLASS **SUSPECT.** WE'LL NEED TO INTERROGATE ANYONE WHO MIGHT HAVE SEEN HIM: STREET WORKERS, HOBOS, MENDICANTS...

WE DON'T **HAVE** MENDICANTS HERE AND DAMN FEW BUMS! THE ONLY **ALCOHOLIC** WE'VE GOT IN LOCKUP IS A **TRANSIENT,** A REPEAT OFFENDER: SOME BIRD BY THE NAME OF **FILIPE PAPALEGUAS.**

THEN WE'LL START WITH HIM. I GOT A FEELING WE'RE GONNA HAVE US SOME **FUN...**

CAPULIN VOLCANO, NEW MEXICO.

...THEN THIS FELLER TELLS ME: "TRAVELING PAINT-SALESMAN IS THE PERFECT JOB FOR A COLORED GUY LIKE YOU..."

...SO I GO, "HEY! YOU MEAN **COLOR-FUL** GUY, NOT NO COLORED GUY! DON'T GO MISTAKIN' ME FER ONE O' THEM **BLACK BOYS!** HEH, HEH, HEH!

'COURSE... NO OFFENSE INTENDED.

SAY, BUDDY, FER A LAFFIN' HYENA, YOU DON'T GOT MUCH SENSE O' HUMOR... HEH, HEH, HEH!

♫ THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC'S GOT ME IN ITS SPELL... THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC THAT YOU WEAVE SO WELL... ♫

SPEAKIN' O' COLOREDS! LISSEN TA JUS' HOW **LOW DOWN** AN' **FUNKY** THEY GET WHEN THEY START TA SINGIN'...

'COURSE... NO OFFENSE INTENDED...

YES, THE GUY **WAS** AN **ASSHOLE,** I GIVE YOU THAT... BUT PUNCHING HIM IN THE HEAD **WHILE** HE'S DRIVING? VERY, VERY DANGEROUS.

WELL... NOW THAT HE'S GOT A **BLACK EYE,** HE CAN CONSIDER HIMSELF EVEN **MORE COLORFUL!**

'COURSE... NO OFFENSE INTENDED...

HEE! HEE! HEE!

LUCKILY, I KNOW SOMEONE WHO LIVES AROUND HERE WHO CAN HELP US... IF WE CAN GET ANOTHER **RIDE** BEFORE DARK.

HEE! HEE! HEE!

IWERKS & KUPKA SUNFLOWER CIRCUS

...A HUGE HAND FOR THE **FABULOUS...**

...HILOBATI AERIALISTS!

NEXT UP: THE ONE, THE ONLY, THE AUDACIOUS AND AMAZING...

HUMBOLDT, THE PENGUIN CANNONBALL!

KNOCK OFF THE DISAPPEARING ACT, KID! I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU. IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE ME MISS THAT STUPID **DRUNK**, PHIL.

BOOOM

YOU NEED TO FIND MY ASSISTANT, LUANNE. AND GET **CRACKING!**

OKAY... I'M ON IT!

"MY NUMBER STARTS RIGHT AFTER ELMORE THE CLOWN."

...YOU MIGHT NOT REMEMBER **ME**, LITTLE LADY, BUT I SURE HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN **YOU**. OR YOUR **REAL** NAME... **EVA.**

I HAVE **NO** IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALK-ING ABOUT!

SURE YOU DO! I WORKED AT YOUR GRANDPA'S HOUSE YEARS AGO. AND I BOUNCED YOU ON MY KNEES **MANY** A TIME WHEN YOU WERE JUST A **TINY** LITTLE DOLL...

GET YOUR HANDS **OFF** ME!

AAAAH!

BUT IF YOU WANT ME TO HOLD MY TONGUE ABOUT WHAT I KNOW... YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO BE A LITTLE **NICER** TO LITTLE OL' ME.

YAARRGH!!
LET HER GO, YOU SCUM!
28

I'LL KILL YOU!

ARGH... AAA...

AAARGH!

CHUNK!

WHAT... WHAT HAVE I DONE?!

LUANNE! WE HAD TO **STALL** THE NUMBER! WHAT THE HELL IS GO--?

AHHH! HELP! MURDER!

HELP! HE KILLED POLYPHEMUS!

29

AH!

GOT 'IM!

OOMPF!

LOCK HIM UP, AND THEN EVERYONE GET BACK TO WORK.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON... AS IF NOTHING'S HAPPENED.

TOMORROW WE'LL **ALL** DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH HIM, TOGETHER.

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO.

BUILT IN 1610, **SAN MIGUEL** IS PROBABLY...

...THE OLDEST CHURCH IN ALL FIFTY STATES.

♫

?

SETTLE DOWN, NEAL.

AH, BUT... WITH A DOLL LIKE HER, IT'S TOUGH TO RESTRAIN MYSELF, MY FRIEND.

WELL, MAKE AN EFFORT. THAT'S MY **SISTER.** DONNA.

RATON, NEW MEXICO.

IF YOU EVER PLAN TO MOTOR WEST,
TRAVEL MY WAY, TAKE THE HIGHWAY THAT IS BEST.
♫ GET YOUR KICKS ON ROUTE SIXTY-SIX...

31

IT WINDS FROM CHICAGO TO L.A., MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND MILES ALL THE WAY. GET YOUR KICKS ON ROUTE SIXTY-SIX... ♪

...SO RAY AND I ARE GETTING BY, THANKS TO MY TOUR GUIDE JOB IN SANTA FE.

WHAT BRINGS **YOU** TO OUR LITTLE CORNER OF THE WORLD?

IT'S A LONG STORY, AND YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT ANYWAY. BUT I'LL NEED TO BORROW YOUR CAR.

TRATON

NOW YOU GO THROUGH SAINT LOOEY, JOPLIN, MISSOURI, AND OKLAHOMA CITY IS MIGHTY PRETTY. YOU SEE AMARILLO, GALLUP, NEW MEXICO... ♪

OKAY... BUT DON'T **TRASH** IT. THAT CAR AND RAY ARE THE **ONLY** GOOD THINGS LEFT FROM MY MARRIAGE.

ANY NEWS FROM DAD?

NOTHING SINCE THAT LAST LETTER...

KINGMAN, BARSTOW, SAN BERNARDINO...

"WON'T YOU GET HIP TO THIS TIMELY TIP: WHEN YOU MAKE THAT CALIFORNIA TRIP GET YOUR KICKS ON ROUTE SIXTY-SIX." ♪

UNCA JOHN! CAN I SEE YOUR GUN?

GOOD GUYS DON'T CARRY GUNS, RAY, 'CAUSE WE KNOW THEY ALWAYS WIND UP **SHOOTING** SOMEONE.

FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA. DON'T FORGET WINONA... ♪

YEAH! THAT'S WHY THEY'RE SO **COOL!**

32

...THE CODE OF THE CIRCUS **BROTHERHOOD** IS VERY CLEAR: WHOEVER KILLS A MEMBER OF OUR FAMILY IS JUDGED **WITHIN** THE FAMILY.

AND THE PUNISHMENT FOR MURDER IS... **DEATH!** YOU ALL **KNOW** THIS!

THIS ISN'T A DIME NOVEL, ELMORE, AND WE'RE NOT SOME ROMANTIC BUNCH OF **PIRATES.** WE'VE GOT A **BUSINESS** TO PROTECT, WHICH MEANS WE SHOULD FOLLOW THE LETTER OF THE LAW.

I VOTE WE TURN HIM OVER TO THE POLICE. WE'VE GOT **ENOUGH** PROBLEMS JUST KEEPING THIS SINKING SHIP AFLOAT, WITHOUT A **MURDERER** TO DEAL WITH, TOO.

LOOK, SIMON, IF THE POLICE GET INVOLVED, WE'LL HAVE TO SHUT DOWN, AND WE CAN'T **AFFORD** THAT, NOT EVEN FOR A FEW DAYS. WE NEED MONEY, **FAST,** JUST TO KEEP FROM GOING BELLY UP!

IF POLYPHEMUS'S DEATH GETS AROUND, THAT'D BE THE **WORST** POSSIBLE PUBLICITY...

...THE **END** OF SUNFLOWER!

JUST DO WHAT YOU NEED TO DO. THAT'S ONLY FAIR.

YOU HEARD HIM. ANY OBJECTIONS, RAISE YOUR HAND...

BACK TO WORK! TEAR DOWN THE BIG TENT. **FOLD UP!**

THE SUNFLOWER CIRCUS WILL DO A QUIET FADE FROM DENVER, AS IF WE WERE NEVER EVEN HERE...

34

LET ME TALK TO THE KID! WE DON'T WANT HIM TO GIVE US THE SLIP NOW.

I DOUBT HE WILL. WITH ALL THE **STUNTS** HE'S PULLED, A **CIRCUS** IS THE **PERFECT** SPOT FOR HIM.

WERKS & KUPKA SUNFLOWER CIRCUS

COTTON CANDY

I JUST HOPE WE'RE NOT TOO LATE AGAIN.

LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE PULLING UP STAKES...

DON'T YOU WORRY! IF IT'S A **PERFORMANCE** YOU WANT, JUST WATCH THE GREAT NEAL BEATO CROSS-EXAMINE THAT GORGEOUS CREATURE!

35

HEL-LO! WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FRIEND OF OURS. CHAD? I BELIEVE HE WORKS HERE...

I... I DON'T KNOW ANYONE BY THAT NAME...

HAVE WE MET BEFORE? YOUR FACE IS VERY FAMILIAR...

MY NAME'S ELMORE KUPKA, THE BOSS OF THIS CIRCUS... CAN I HELP YOU BOYS?

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FRIEND WHO WORKS HERE... A YOUNG LION?

GOT IT! I KNOW WHO SHE IS!

PAF!

I NEVER FORGET A PRETTY FACE... OR A REWARD WITH LOTS OF ZEROES ATTACHED!

ALL RIGHT. I GOT A BUSINESS PROPOSITION FOR YOU: I'LL TAKE YOU TO CHAD IF YOU TELL ME HOW TO GET MY MITTS ON THAT REWARD.

DEAL! TELL HIM WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO TELL HIM, NEAL, AND LET'S BE DONE WITH THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL...

36

CHAD'S IN HERE. WE CAUGHT HIM STEALING, SO WE LOCKED HIM UP IN THE BACK.

THAT KID HAS A REAL **PROBLEM** KEEPING HIS PAWS OFF OTHER PEOPLE'S PROPERTY...

SLAM!!

ALMOST FORGOT... THERE ARE SOME GOOD OL' BOYS WAITING FOR YOU. SO LONG, RUBES!

WAIT... WHAT?

SURPRISE!

DIDN'T TAKE MUCH TO CONVINCE YOUR BUDDY PHIL HERE TO LEAD US TO THE CIRCUS.

THIS BIRD'LL DO **ANYTHING** FOR A DRINK...

37

DESTRUCTION OF A POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT MAILBOX--NOT TO MENTION THAT **STIFF** IN THE TRUNK OF THE CADDY. FOR SUCH A **SMART** GUY, YOU SURE DIDN'T COVER YOUR TRACKS THIS TIME.

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S COMING OUT OF YOUR MOUTH, OTHER THAN YOUR **BIG FLAT FOOT,** AS USUAL...

BET THERE'S NOTHING NEW IN YOUR "BAG OF TRICKS" TO GET YOU OUT OF **THIS,** CAT.

TRUTH IS...

BAF!

...THE OLD TRICKS STILL WORK JUST FINE.

SLAM!!

AAAAH!!

BLAMM!!

FUCKING CAT!

BOOM!

BEAUTIFUL, NEAL!

HELP!!

38

AGH... MY HEAD!

GET ME OUTTA HERE!

I'M NOT EVEN HURT! IT MUST BE... WITCHCRAFT!

YOU IDIOT! IT'S NOT A **REAL** IRON MAIDEN! YOU'RE IN A **CIRCUS** PROP!

VROOM

THEY'RE GETTING AWAY! **MOVE IT!**

AND **YOU**, DON'T DO **ANY-THING** STUPID UNTIL WE **NAIL** THOSE PRICKS!

THESE ABANDONED GOLD MINES RUN ALL THROUGH COLORADO'S MOUNTAIN RANGES. COULD TAKE **HUNDREDS** OF YEARS BEFORE SOMEONE WANDERS DOWN HERE...

YOU GET THAT THIS IS NOTHING **PERSONAL**, CHAD...

YEAH, WE ALL KNOW POLYPHEMUS WAS A REAL **SLEAZEBAG**...

...BUT WE CAN'T LET THE WHOLE CIRCUS **TANK** JUST BECAUSE OF YOU.

THEN KILL ME! DON'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS! I DON'T WANNA DIE OF HUNGER... OR THIRST!

PLEASE...

WHY DIDN'T YOU RAT ME OUT?

BECAUSE... I MADE A HORRIBLE **MISTAKE** NOT LONG AGO, AND I JUST WANTED TO MAKE UP FOR IT, SOMEHOW, WITH ONE **GOOD** THING...

WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

ONE GOOD THING... I HOPE.

40

THAT GODDAMN CAT'S GONE CRAZY!

I'LL SHOW HIM CRAZY!

BANG!

BOOM!

SCREEE!

-EEEEEEEEEE

VROOOOO

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

AAAHHHH

BADABOOM

BADA

FUCKIN' IDIOT!!

HUFF, HUFF... **YOU** WRITE THE REPORT THIS TIME, **MORON!**

?!

PARTY'S **OVER**, CAT--!

AREN'T YOU THE ONE WHO SAID I'D "DO **ANYTHING** FOR A DRINK"?

WRAP IT UP! WE LEAVE IN ONE HOUR!

SIMON, WE **HAVE** TO FIND LUANNE. THAT GIRL IS WORTH A **LOT** OF MONEY!

YESTERDAY YOU COULDN'T **WAIT** TO AVENGE POLYPHEMUS, NO MATTER THE COST, AND NOW TODAY YOU'D SELL OUT ONE OF OUR **OWN** PERFORMERS...

WHO THE HELL HAVE YOU BECOME, ELMORE? WHAT ABOUT THAT **BROTHERHOOD** YOU CLAIM TO HOLD SO DEAR?

IF WE DON'T PAY OFF OUR DEBTS, THE FAMILY WILL FALL TO PIECES! I'VE GIVEN MY WHOLE **LIFE** TO THIS CIRCUS, AND I'LL DO **WHATEVER** IT TAKES TO **SAVE** IT!

SO WILL I, AND I'M NOT WASTING **ANY MORE TIME.** THE SUNFLOWER CIRCUS LEAVES ON TOUR FOR CANADA IN ONE HOUR.

WE'RE NOT WAITING... FOR ANY-ONE.

I SAW **LUANNE!** SHE BOUGHT A TRAIN TICKET TO CHICAGO...

...AND SHE WASN'T **ALONE!**

42

SO... WHO'S **EVA?**

GRAND-DAUGHTER OF AARON P. LANGE, A FAT CAT OF YELLOW JOURNALISM.

ME.

A NEWSPAPER HEIRESS WORKING FOR CHICKEN FEED IN THE CIRCUS?

MORE LIKE THE **KILLER** OF THE HEIR.

I WAS ONLY FOURTEEN YEARS OLD WHEN I GOT PREGNANT... ONLY FOURTEEN WHEN THEY FORCED ME INTO AN ABORTION TO "AVOID SCANDAL"...

...ONLY FOURTEEN WHEN I RAN AWAY FROM HOME.

ONLY FOURTEEN...

I WHIPPED UP A FAKE NAME AND SIGNED ON WITH THE CIRCUS. A NEW FAMILY... WHERE NOBODY ASKS ANY QUESTIONS.

MY REAL FAMILY HAS SPENT A LONG TIME LOOKING FOR ME, AND THEY'VE PUT UP SOME SERIOUS BREAD TO GET ME BACK. IT'S LIKE A BAD **NOVEL**, RIGHT?

NOVELS ARE **BULLSHIT.** BUT REAL LIFE IS EVEN WORSE.

NIGHT SHIFT. LINENS.

TOC TOC

COMING...

FOLLOW ME...

...I WANNA SHOW YOU A PIECE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE.

DON'T **BUDGE**, EVA. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

CLICK

MOVE IT, CHAD.

OPEN THE DOOR.

44

CREEEK

DON'T YOU WORRY, MISS EVA. EVERYTHING'S UNDER CONTROL...

NO **PUSSYCAT** TO PULL YOUR FAT OUT OF THE FIRE **THIS** TIME, YOUNG CUB!

WOOOSH

JUMP!

WHUKKK!

CRAK!

AAAH!!

CHOMP!

BAM!

ARGH!

AH!!

45

DON'T DO THIS...

YAAAAARGH!

AAAA...

AAAAAAAAAAAA

TOO LATE FOR THAT, KID.

I... DON'T WANT TO BE A KILLER.

CHAD!

LUANNE!

UNION STATION. CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

I'M **REALLY** SORRY ABOUT YOUR CAR, DONNA...

PENNSYLVANIA RR UNION STATION BURLINGTON

TELEPHONE

ALL SET. YOU CAN HIDE OUT AT MY SISTER'S PLACE FOR A WHILE. BUT WE SHOULD BOTH GET GOING. NEAL AND CHAD ARE AT THE BUS STATION, WAITING FOR ME.

...BUT I STILL HAVE **ANOTHER** FAVOR TO ASK. IT'S ABOUT A FRIEND...

CHAD CAN'T COME WITH **ME**, ON THE TRAIN?

YOU HEARD HIS STORY. HE **KILLED** A GUY.

HIS **FRIEND.** AND IT **HAUNTS** HIM EVERY DAY. ISN'T THAT PUNISHMENT ENOUGH?

HERE'S THE ADDRESS. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, LUANNE.

47

GREYHOUND BUS STATION. CHICAGO.

GREYHOUND

LOOK ON THE **BRIGHT** SIDE, CHAD. IT'S A CLEAR-CUT CASE OF INVOLUNTARY HOMICIDE WITH EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES: NAMELY, EXCESSIVE CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL...

IF YOU PLEAD GUILTY, THEN WITH THE HELP OF A **GREAT** ATTORNEY...

...AND THAT WOULD BE **ME**... I'LL HAVE YOU OUT IN LESS THAN A YEAR...

LIGHTEN UP, KID! PRETTY SOON YOU'LL BE AUTOGRAPHING YOUR BOOK, SURROUNDED BY SEXY BEATNIK CHICKS, WITH MORE **NOTES** IN YOUR **BANK** ACCOUNT THAN **ANY** BEBOP JAM...

FLUSHHH

...AND EVEN BETTER: IN **MY** ACCOUNT, TOO!

NEW YORK

BOSTON

JOHN SHOULD BE HERE SOON...

WE'VE GOT QUITE A FEW HOURS AHEAD OF US ON THE ROAD. I MIGHT AS WELL TAKE THAT TIME TO FINISH READING YOUR NOVEL. WHERE IS IT, BY THE WAY?

I LEFT IT IN THE PUBLIC SHITTER.

48

YOU WHAT?

ABE WAS RIGHT. AT LEAST THERE, MAYBE, IT'LL BE **USEFUL.**

CUT THE SHIT RIGHT NOW, KID! MOPE ALL YOU **WANT,** BUT QUIT TRYING TO DRAG THE **WHOLE DAMN WORLD** DOWN **WITH** YOU!

WHERE'RE YOU GOING?

TO GET THAT SCROLL. I'M GONNA PUBLISH IT. LIKE IT OR **NOT.**

YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND! THAT BOOK HAS GIVEN ME NOTHING BUT TRAGEDY.

THE ONLY REAL TRAGEDY IS YOU CHOOSING TO DIE A SLOW, STUPID DEATH WHEN YOU'VE GOT YOUR ENTIRE GODDAMN LIFE AHEAD OF YOU...

DO WHATEVER THE HELL YOU WANT, BUT I WANT TO **LIVE.** CAN YOU DIG **THAT?**

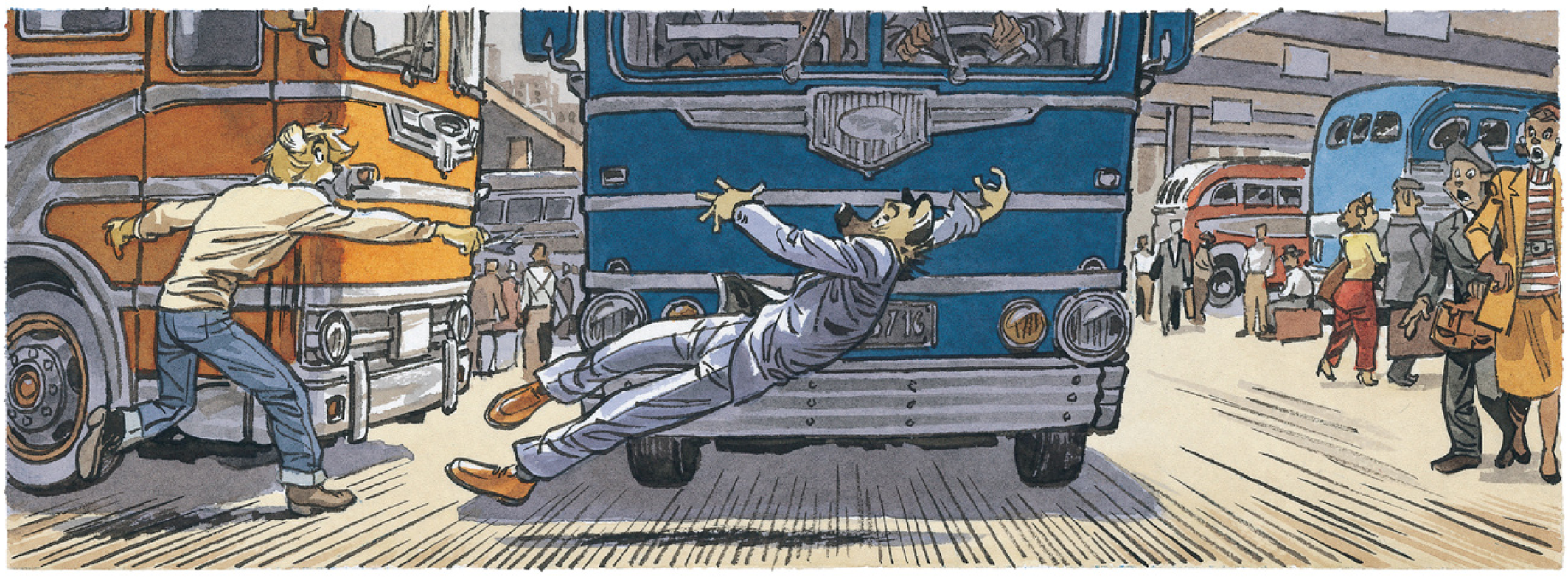
TO LIVE AND LAUGH, TO PLAY, TO DANCE... **ANYTHING** BUT **WALLOW** IN MY OWN **PITIFUL SHIT** AS IF THAT WERE SOME GRAND **AESTHETIC ENTERPRISE.**

PLATFORM 3, 4

YOU DON'T HAVE THE **RIGHT!**

RR-RIIP!!

49



OFFEE

HEY, JOHN... I WOULD'VE LIKED TO SEE YOUR SISTER AGAIN... WHO KNOWS? YOU COULDA WOUND UP MY BROTHER-IN-LAW...

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, NEAL! A **LAWYER** IN THE FAMILY? NOT A **CHANCE**...

HEE! HEE! H--

OH, NO, NO, NO... **NEAL!** NOT **AGAIN**, NOT **YOU!**

I SAW IT ALL!

YEAH, THAT YOUNG LION **PUSHED** HIM!

SOMEBODY CALL THE COPS!

51

LUANNE!

CHAD? WHAT'S GOING ON?

LISTEN, LUANNE, TAKE HIM **WITH** YOU. GET AS FAR **AWAY** AS YOU CAN. MEXICO OR EUROPE...

BUT YOU...

NOT TO WORRY, KID. I'VE **BEEN** TO EUROPE--AND DON'T NEED TO REPLAY **THOSE** MEMORIES...

END OF THE ROAD, CAT...

CASE CLOSED. WE'VE EVEN IDENTIFIED THE BODY...

THE BODY... BELONGS TO **ABRAHAM GREENBERG**...

I SHOT HIM IN FRONT OF **BILL SORROWS**, WHO CAN CONFIRM THAT FOR YOU.

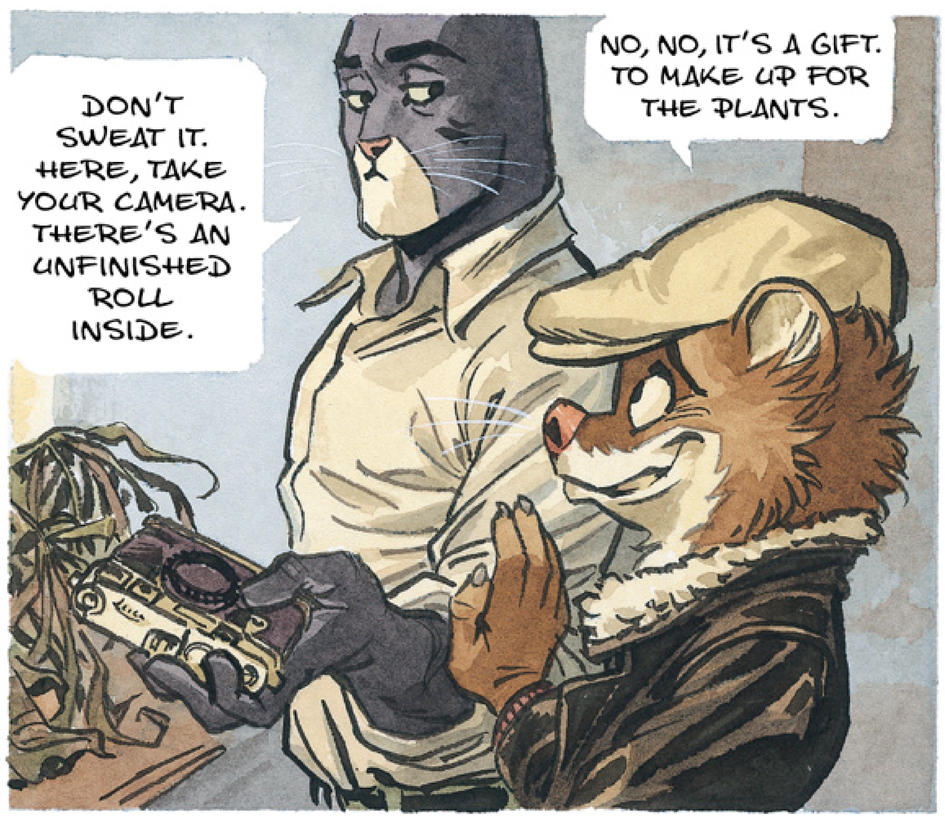
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, CHAD?

ONE GOOD THING... I HOPE.

52

NEW YORK.

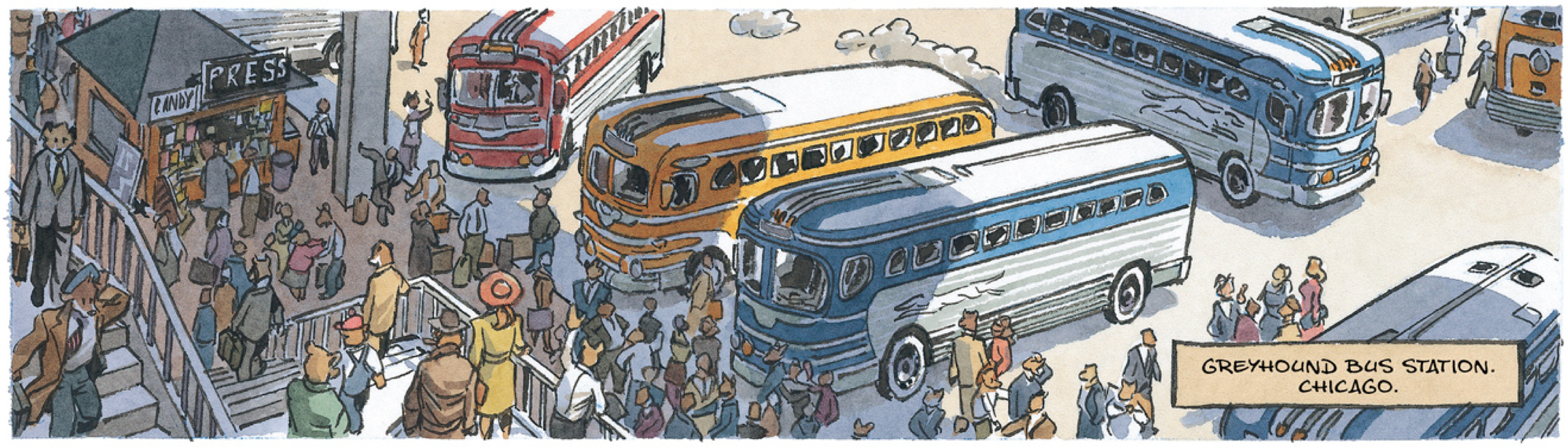
I'M SORRY I LET YOUR PLANTS DIE, JOHN... I GUESS I FORGOT TO WATER THEM...


DON'T SWEAT IT. HERE, TAKE YOUR CAMERA. THERE'S AN UNFINISHED ROLL INSIDE.
NO, NO, IT'S A GIFT. TO MAKE UP FOR THE PLANTS.

OKAY, THEN. THANKS, CHUM.
JUST... PROMISE YOU'LL SHOW ME THE PHOTOS ONCE THEY'RE DEVELOPED.

DEAL.

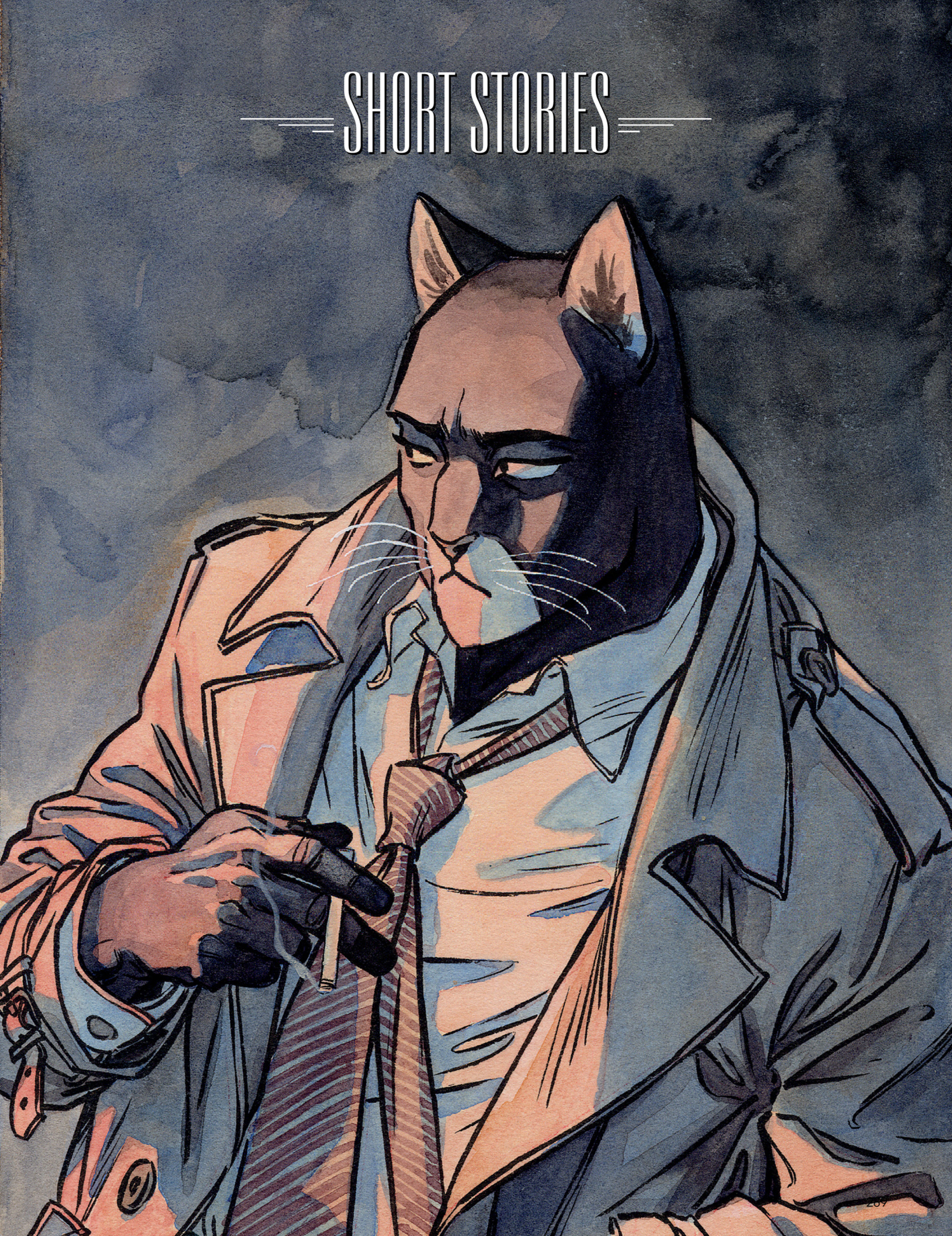
53



JUANJO GUARNIDO & JUAN DÍAZ CANALES

- 2013 -

SHORT STORIES



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JUAN DIAZ CANALES

Illustrated by

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TOM ORZECHOWSKI AND LOIS BUHALIS

SPIT AT THE SKY

I RARELY WATCH TELEVISION, AND WHENEVER I DO, I ALWAYS REGRET IT.

THE NEWS
CHINESE ATTACK IN NORTH KOREA
MACARTHUR THREATENS BEIJING WITH A-BOMB

BUT THE OTHER DAY, I SAW A COMEDIAN WHO GAVE ME PAUSE. THE GUY HAD A CURIOUS THEORY: THAT PEOPLE FIT INTO ONE OF THREE GROUPS, DEPENDING ON THE WAY THEY SPIT.

THE MAJORITY EXPECTORATE TO THE GROUND. THESE PEOPLE TEND TO BE RESIGNED, AND GO THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT EVER STANDING UP STRAIGHT.

THEN THERE ARE THOSE WHO SPLUTTER WHILE TALKING...

THIS MAN MURDERED MY TWO SONS... I'M JUST ASKING FOR WHAT'S RIGHT... WON'T YOU HELP ME FIND HIM? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO UPHOLD THE LAW...

MA'AM, FOR THE LAST TIME...!

...USUALLY IN THE DIRECTION OF THEIR LISTENER. THIS SECOND GROUP IS THE MOST AGGRESSIVE...

...AND COMPOSED OF MORE OR LESS VIOLENT TYPES. TYPICALLY, THEY ARE THE RULING CLASS.

JUST TRY IT! I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU!

IF YOU DON'T GET OUT OF MY FACE, I WILL ARREST YOU FOR DISTURBING THE PEACE!

FINALLY, THERE ARE THE NUTS AND IDEALISTS, WHO SPIT AT THE SKY...

FORGIVE HER, OFFICER. SHE'S MY NEIGHBOR... LATELY SHE'S BEEN A LITTLE UPSET...

...KNOWING THAT, INEVITABLY, THEY ARE SPITTING ON THEMSELVES.

...TOO MUCH TELEVISION!

SHE WASN'T REALLY MY NEIGHBOR, BUT A FORMER CLIENT. AT THE TIME, I HADN'T FOLLOWED UP ON HER CASE, SO I FELT A MORAL OBLIGATION TOWARDS HER...

NOW I REMEMBER. YOU'RE THE DETECTIVE... HAVE YOU DECIDED TO HELP ME AFTER ALL?

I TOLD YOU BEFORE, MA'AM, THE FELLOW YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS TOO POWERFUL. A SECOND-RATE SHAMUS LIKE ME WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST SOMEONE LIKE HIM...

BUT AREN'T WE *ALL* EQUAL IN THE EYES OF THE LAW? THIS MAN CAME TO MY HOUSE AND CONVINCED MY BABIES, JOSEPH AND BENJAMIN, TO GO WORK FOR HIM. HE PROMISED THEM A GOOD JOB, AND SWORE THEY WERE MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE...

I KNOW HIM, I HAVE HIS PICTURE, I KNOW HE MURDERED MY CHILDREN, AND YET NO ONE SEEMS ABLE TO BRING HIM TO JUSTICE...

...WE GET THE WORLD THAT WE DESERVE.

MY ELDEST SON WOULD BE YOUR AGE NOW, IF NOT FOR THIS BRUTE.

DO ME A FAVOR, PLEASE. HOLD ONTO THIS IN CASE YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND SOMEDAY AND DECIDE TO HELP ME FIND HIM.

I KNEW THIS BIRD, ALL RIGHT. HE'D TRICKED ME, TOO, WITH HIS PROMISES OF A BETTER WORLD.

I'D DISCOVERED HIS LIES IN A LOST FIELD IN EUROPE, STREWN WITH CORPSES. TODAY, MANY YOUNG MEN WERE NO DOUBT FINDING THOSE SAME LIES, IN SOME KOREAN VILLAGE...

I WANT YOU FOR U.S. ARMY

I PUT THE POSTER UP WITH THE REST OF MY "PENDING" CASES, AND WENT OUT TO DO SOME CHRISTMAS SHOPPING... WITH AN OVERWHELMING URGE TO SPIT AT THE SKY.

END

LIKE CATS AND DOGS

816

HOTELS ARE SUCH STRANGE PLACES.

WITH PEOPLE FROM ALL FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH CLUSTERED INSIDE THE SAME FOUR WALLS. PEOPLE WHO CHANGE HABITAT, BUT NOT HABITS.

BARRYS

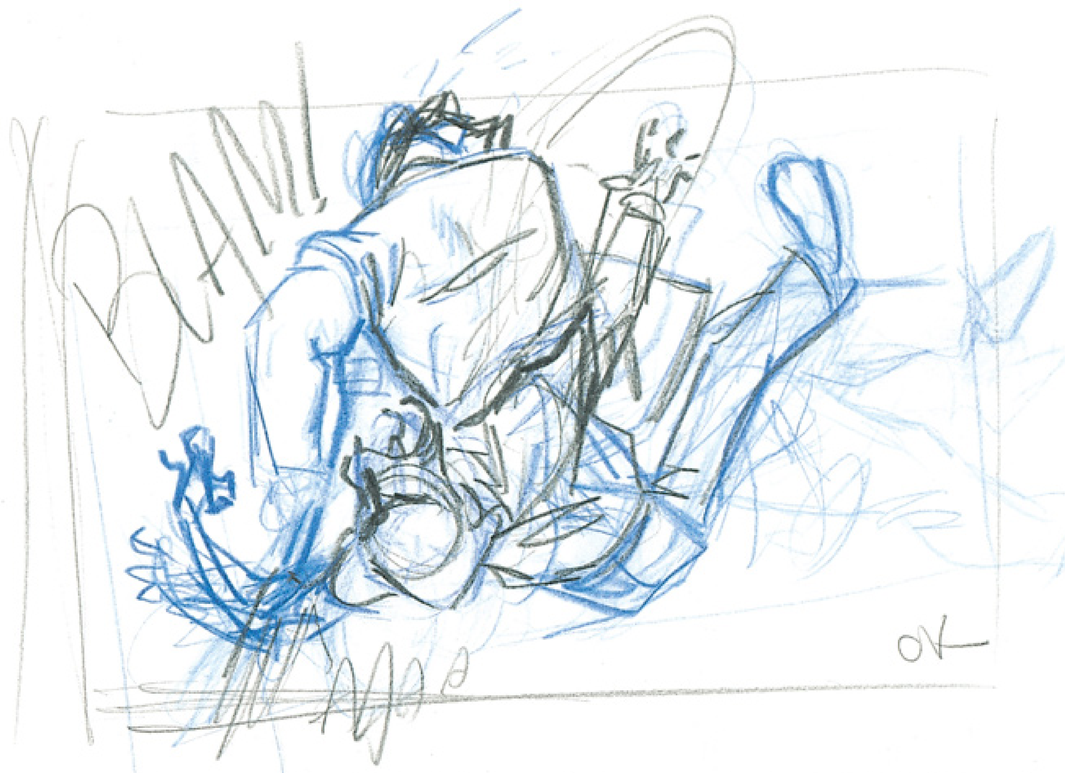
STAGE AND SCREEN SHOW

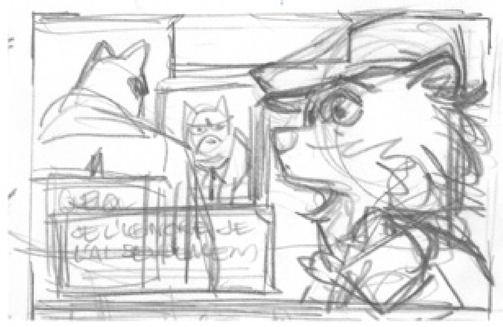
AS IF ACTING OUT THE SAME IMMUTABLE SCRIPT, WRITTEN IN THE TWILIGHT OF TIME.

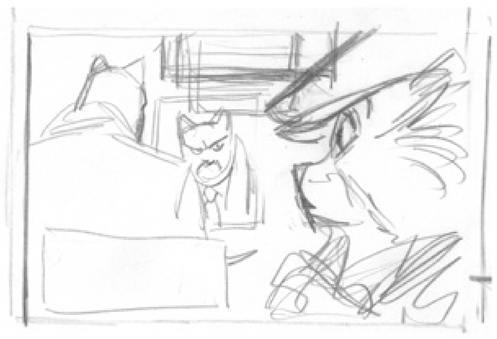
TWELVE HOURS WITHOUT A BITE, AND I'M STILL NOT HUNGRY. MY STOMACH IS TANGLED IN KNOTS.

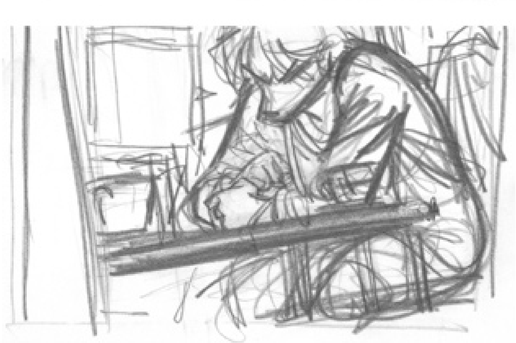
SALVATION ARMY
MAYBE I'M CHOKING ON THE TEDIUM OF SCENES PLAYED OVER AND OVER AGAIN. LIKE SOME MONOTONOUS REFRAIN, WHOSE SOUR NOTES ARE JUST TOO OFF-KEY FOR REAL MUSIC.
BIT BY BIT, MY STOMACH SETTLES. AND THOUGH THE NIGHT IS STILL LONG, I KNOW WHAT WILL HELP ME DIGEST THE GLOOM.
COFFEE SHOP
A COFFEE...
... AND A FRIEND.
JUANJO GUARNIDO & JUAN DÍAZ CANALES 2003
END

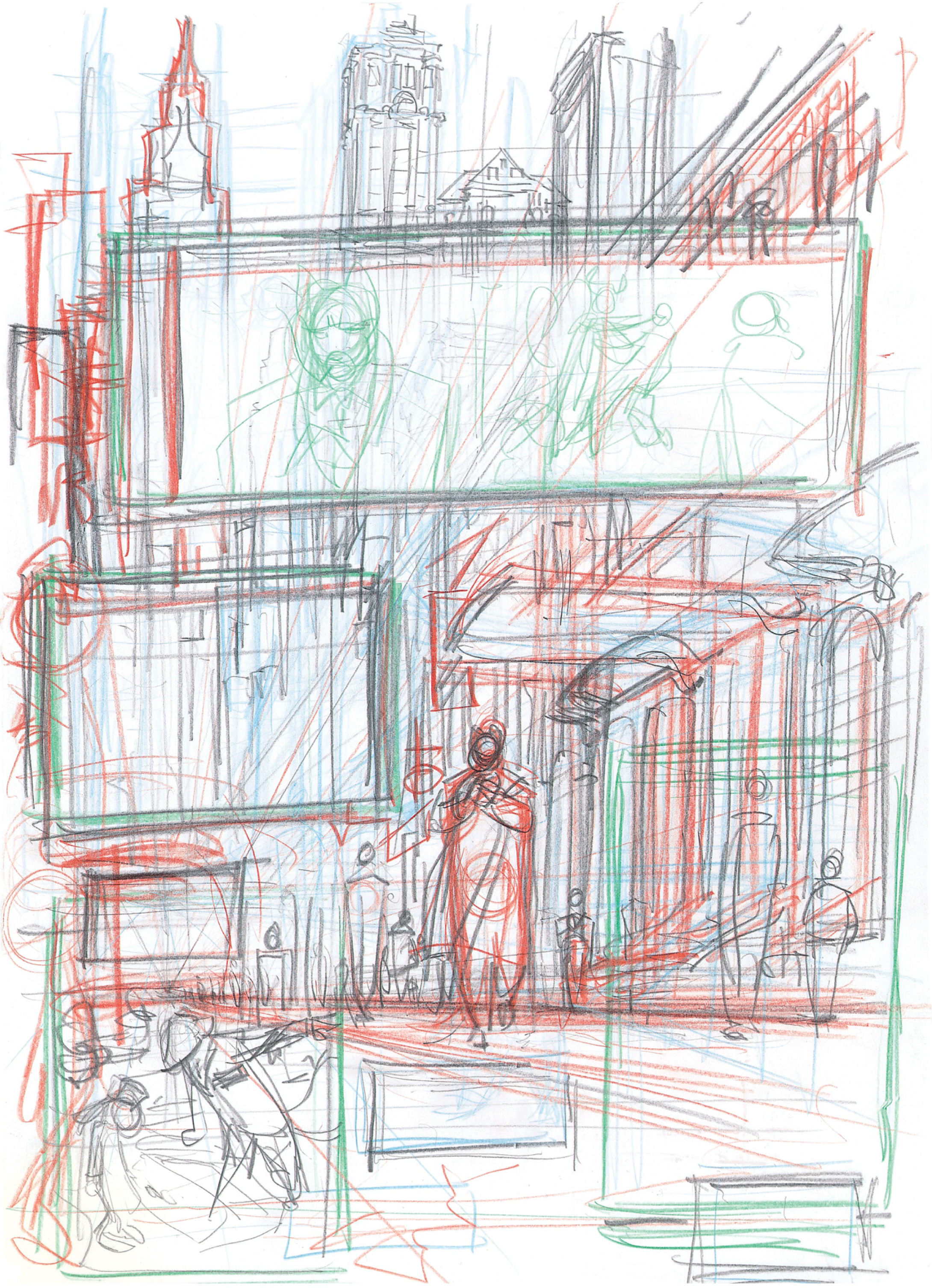
SKETCHBOOK











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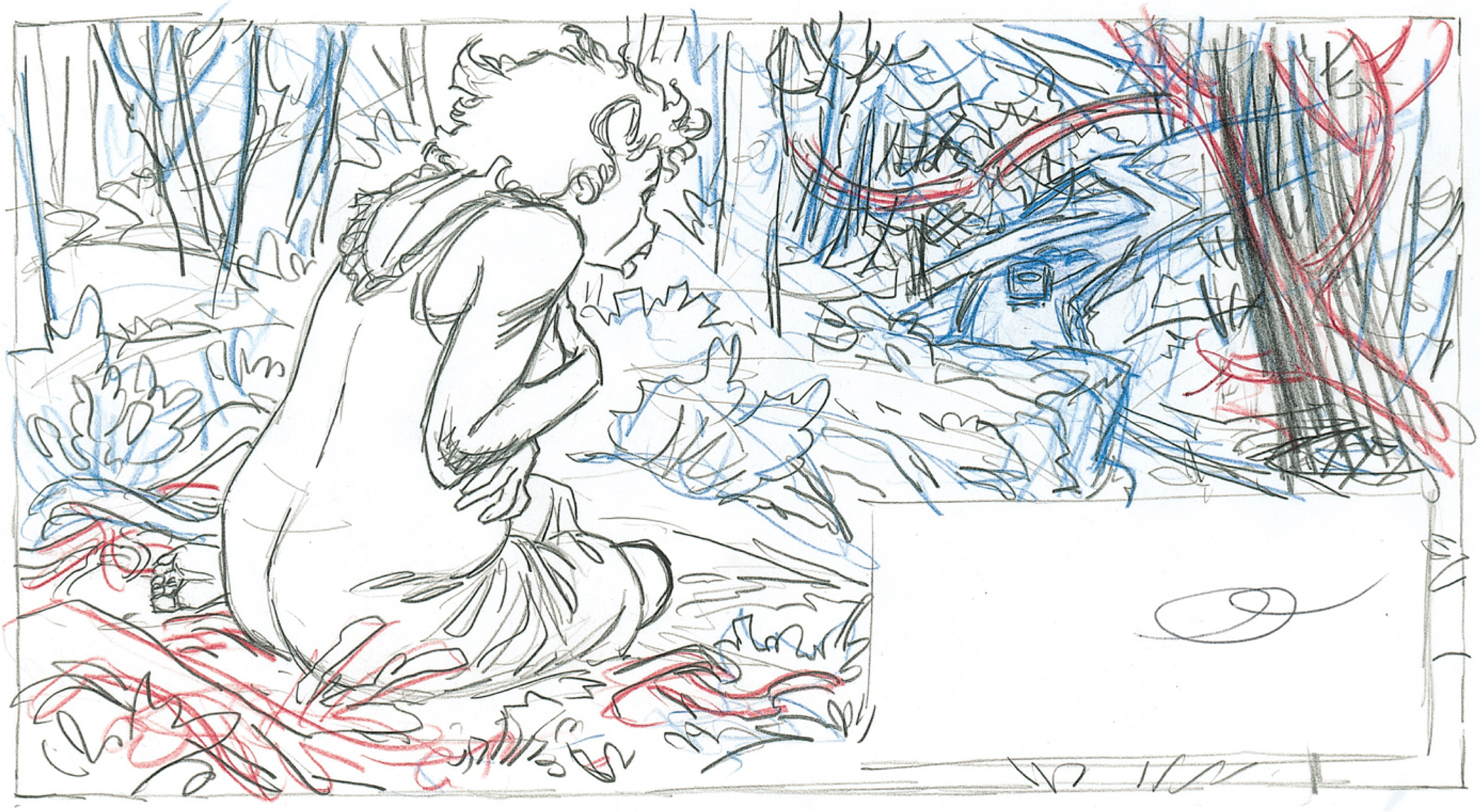

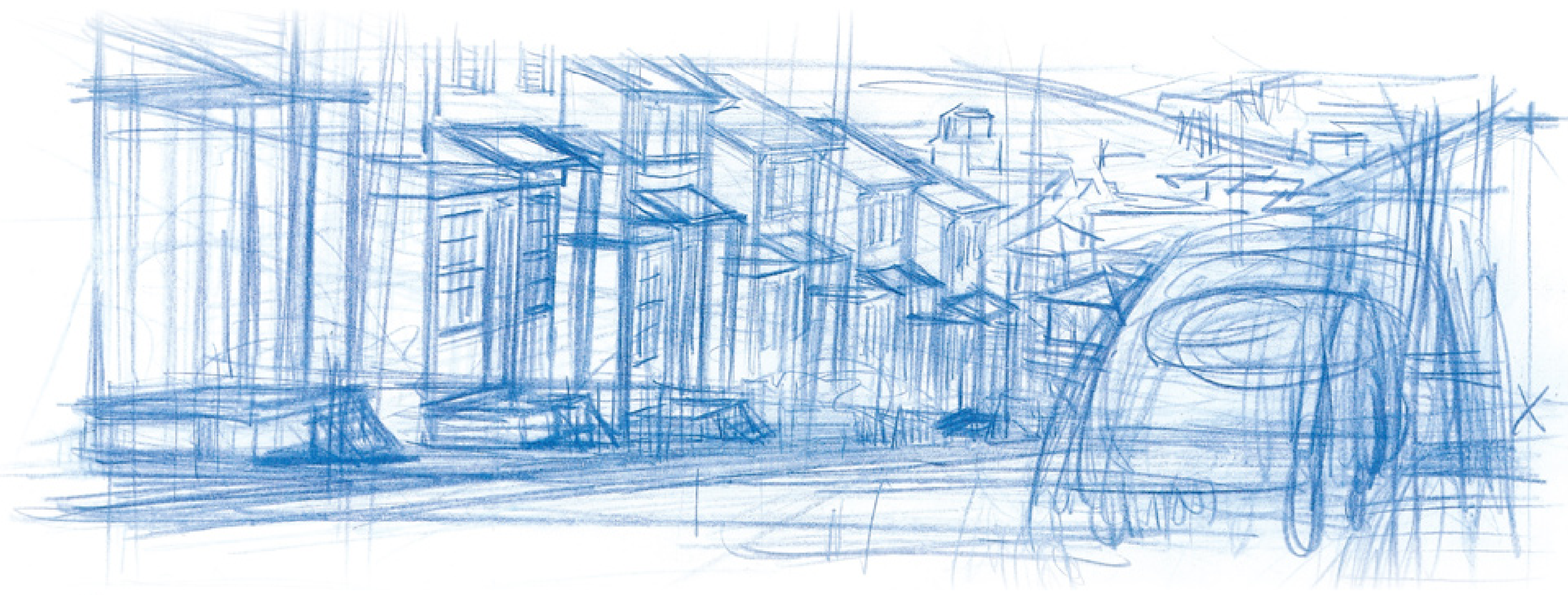

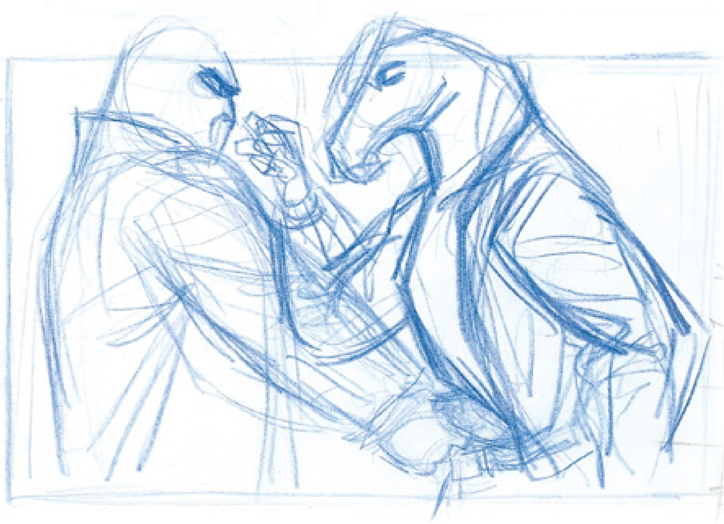

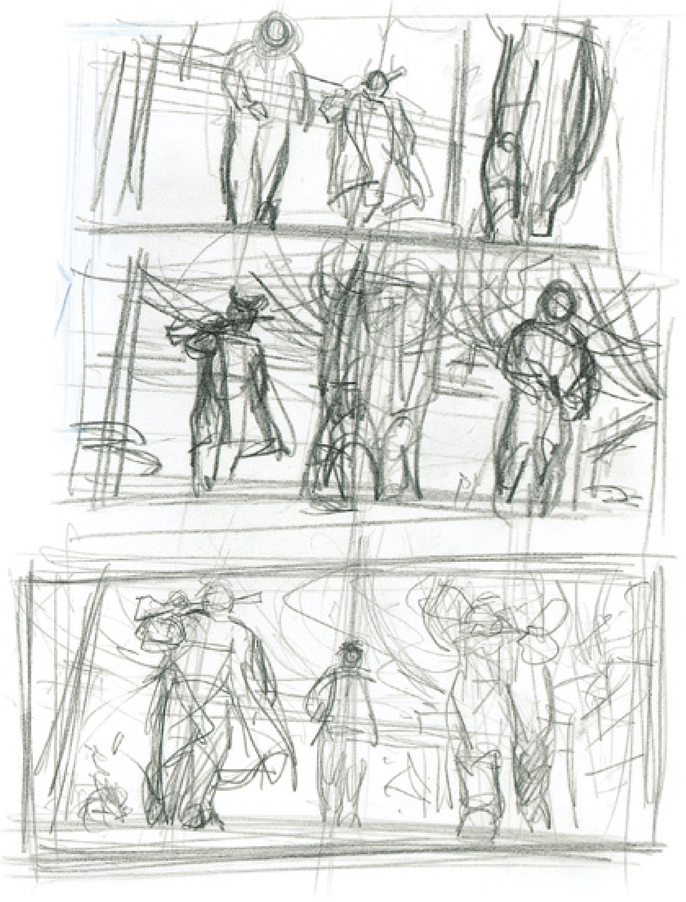

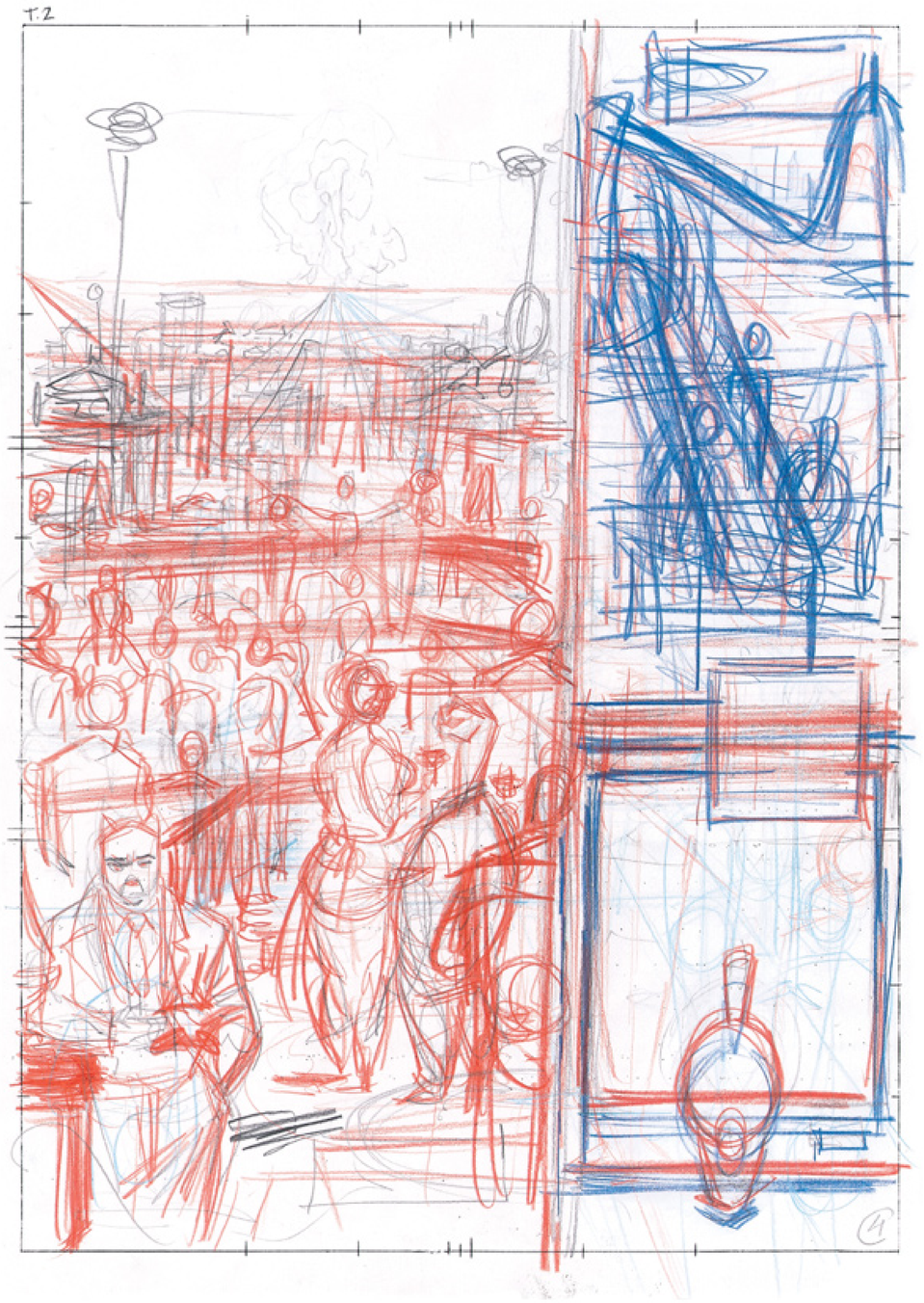
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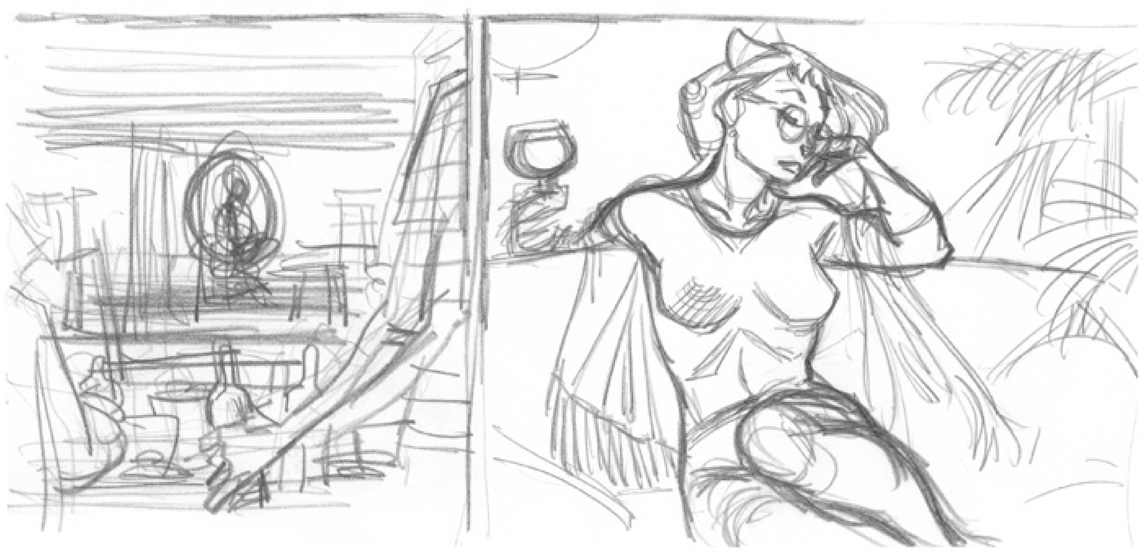

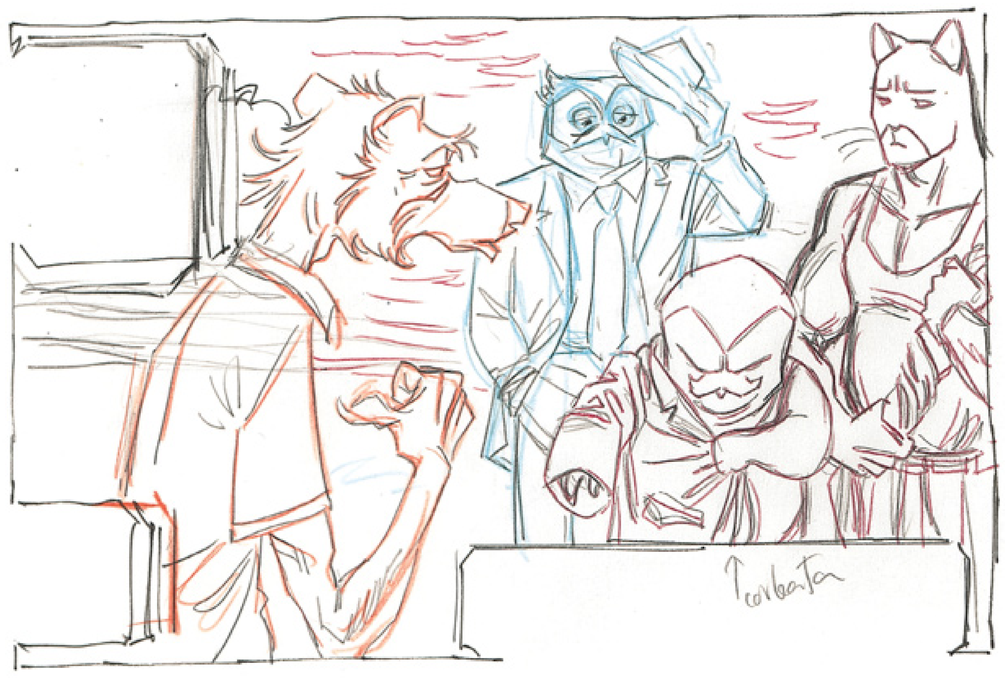
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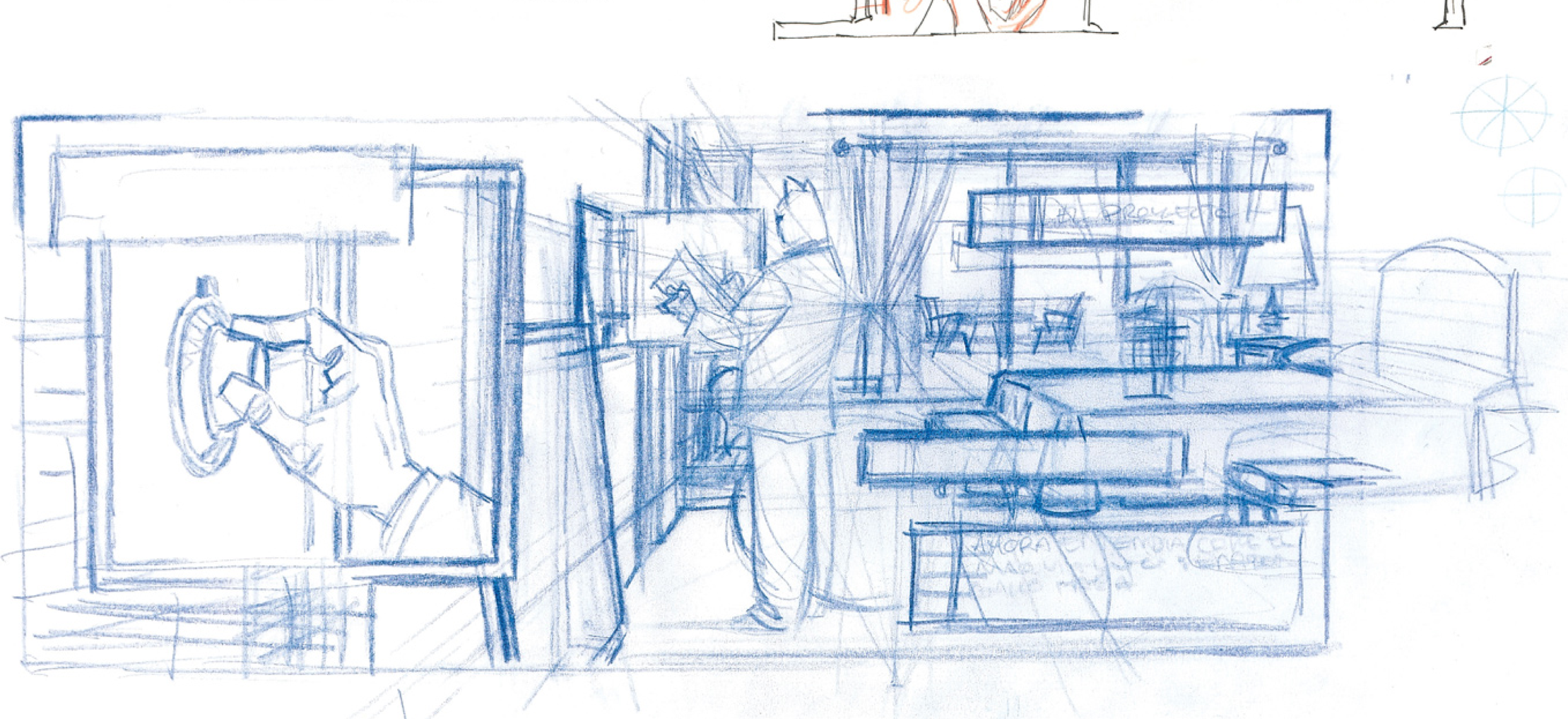

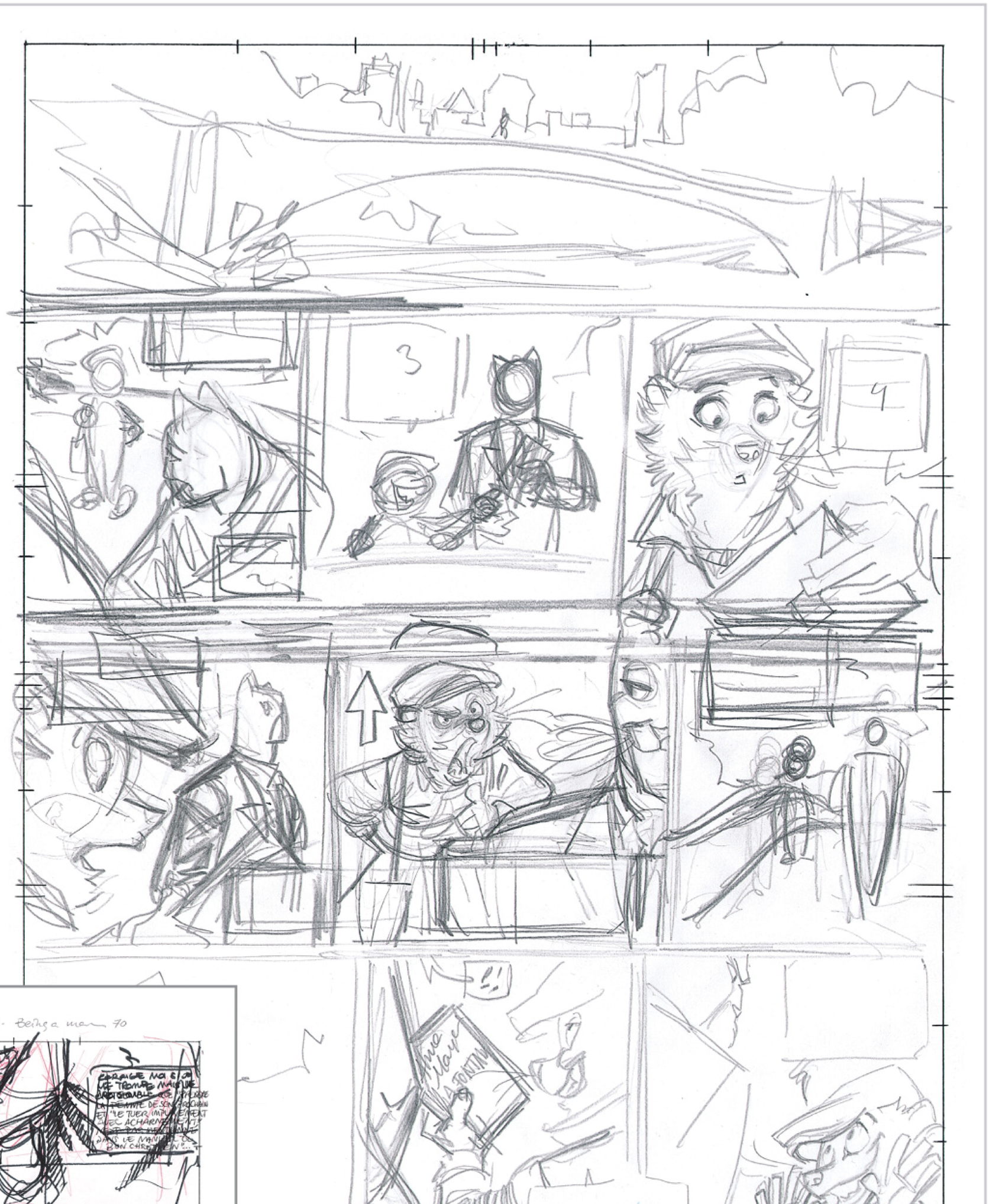
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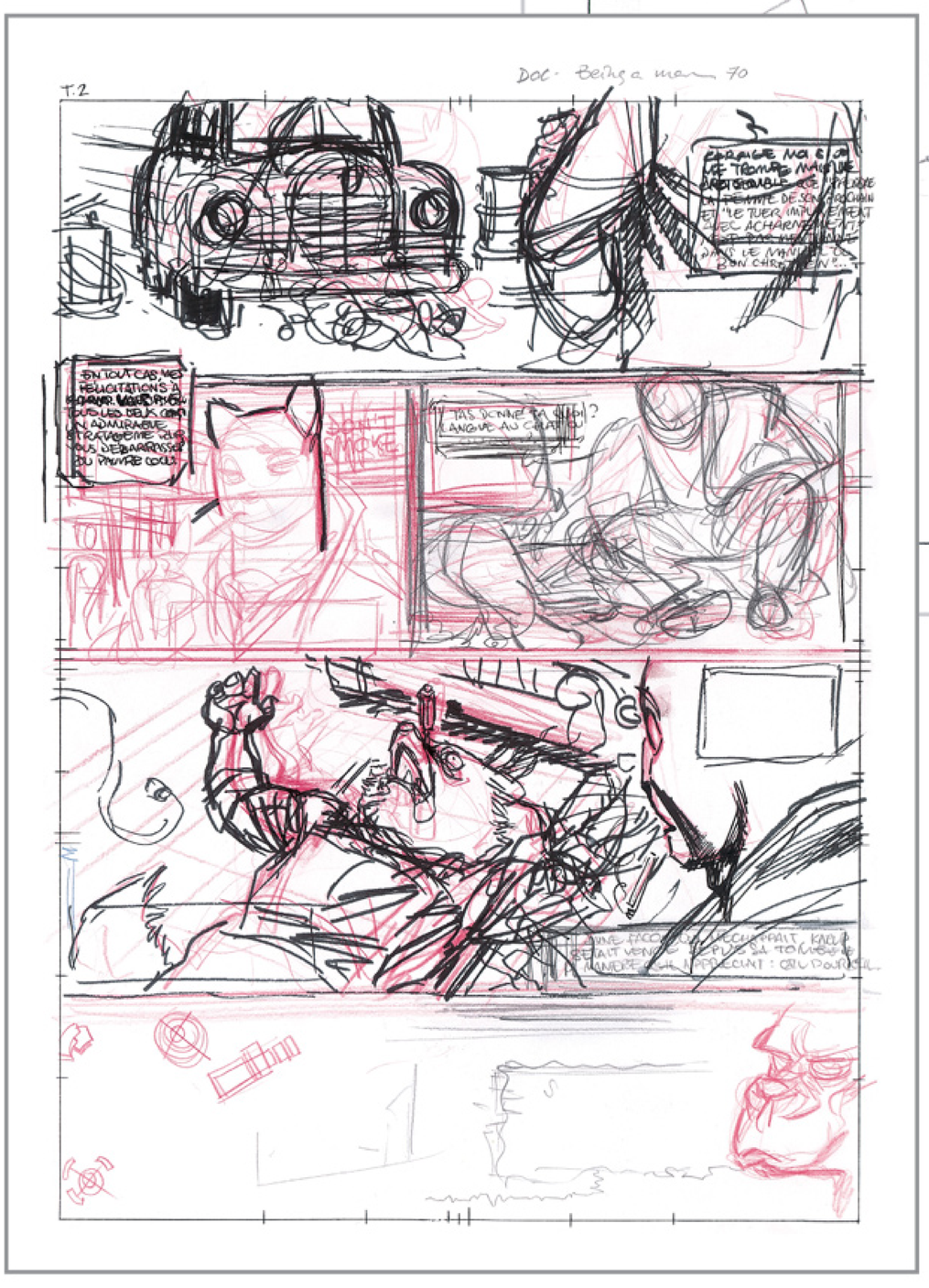

DOC · Being a man 70
T.2
EN TOUT CAS MES FELICITATIONS A VOTRE VICTIME QUI LES DEUX CAMS UN ADMIRABLE STRATAGEME POUR SE DEBARRASSER DU PAUVRE COUS
TAS DONNE TA LANGUE AU CHAT ?

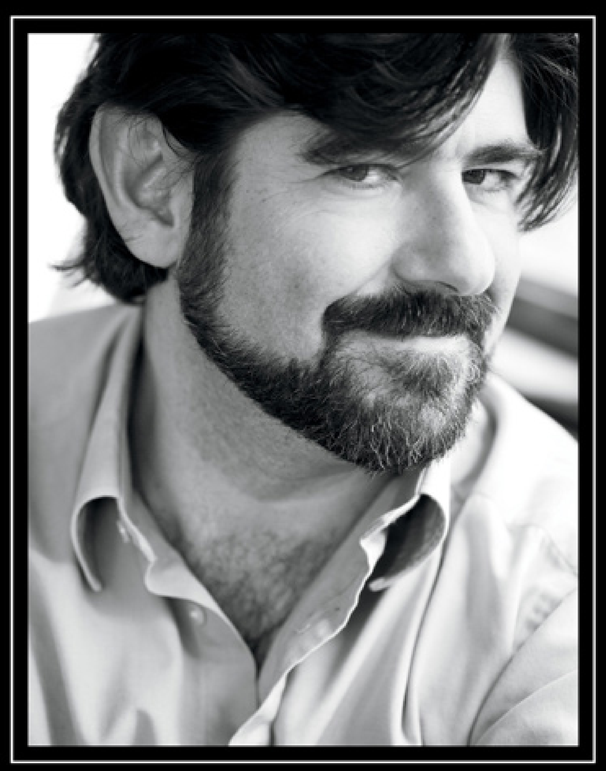
BLACKSAD
Arme Rouge

JUAN DÍAZ CANALES

Born in Madrid in 1972, Díaz Canales was a comics enthusiast from the very beginning. In 1990, at age eighteen, he was hired to do layout art for the Spanish animation studio Lápiz Azul, where he met Juanjo Guarnido. The two quickly became close friends and remained in contact after Guarnido moved to Paris in 1993 to work for the French satellite Disney animation studio. Distance, however, did not prevent the two friends from trading ideas about the comics project that would become *Blacksad*, a series of graphic albums written by Díaz Canales in the hard-boiled style of 1950s noir fiction.

During this time, Díaz Canales also studied fine arts at Universidad Complutense de Madrid until 1996, when he founded the Tridente Animación studio with three colleagues. This led to a variety of work for European and American companies. Currently the writer alternates between scripting comics and storyboarding television animated series and feature films.

Launched in the year 2000 to tremendous critical acclaim, *Blacksad* was Díaz Canales's first published work in comics. He has since collaborated with several artists, including José Luis Munuera on the graphic album *Fraternity*.



© Rita Scaglia

JUANJO GUARNIDO

Juanjo Guarnido was born in Granada, Spain, in 1967.

He spent his childhood drawing, in the town of Salobreña on the Mediterranean coast, before moving north to Granada with his family. There he began contributing to many local fanzines and studied fine arts, obtaining his degree from Universidad de Granada. At this time, Guarnido also had illustrations published by Comics Forum—the division of Planeta DeAgostini producing Spanish-language editions of Marvel's comics—which allowed the artist to reach a wider audience in his native country. He turned next to animation, moving to Madrid to spend three years working on various television shows under the aegis of the Lápiz Azul animation studio.

On his first day at Lápiz Azul, Guarnido met Juan Díaz Canales, who would become his friend and the writer of *Blacksad*. In 1993, Guarnido moved to Paris to join the Walt Disney Studios satellite in Montreuil, first as a layout artist on *A Goofy Movie*, Mickey Mouse's *Runaway Brain*, and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, then becoming an animator on such films as *Hercules*, *Tarzan*, and *Atlantis*. Guarnido also contributed his talents to both *The Jungle Book 2* and *Lorenzo* before the French Disney office closed down, ten years after he was first hired.

A longtime fan both of the European *bande dessinée* market and of American comics, Guarnido patiently began the production of his first graphic album while still at Disney, working long distance with Díaz Canales toward the 2000 publication of *Blacksad: Somewhere within the Shadows*. The overwhelming success of the title has allowed Guarnido to take on other projects—like *Sorcelleries* with writer Teresa Valero—but his time is nonetheless primarily devoted to the adventures of John Blacksad.

"As good as it gets!"
—Stan Lee

"A tour de force! Don't miss this!"
—Neal Adams

"Grade: A. Feels like unearthed film-noir storyboards of a master."
—Entertainment weekly

BLACKSAD

Private Investigator John Blacksad has the unfortunate talent of getting into trouble wherever he goes. His enemies would say he can't help sticking his nose where it doesn't belong, but others would tell you that he is just a good cat trying to do the right thing in a bad world. With every case he takes Blacksad puts all nine of his lives on the line, solving murders, kidnappings, high stakes political mysteries and more. Guarnido's sumptuously painted pages and rich cinematic style bring the world of 1950s America to vibrant life, with Canales weaving captivating tales of conspiracy, racial tension, and the "red scare" Communist witch hunts of the time.

Earning nearly a dozen of comics' highest awards and praise from masters such as Stan Lee, Jim Steranko, Neal Adams, and Will Eisner, *Blacksad* has become a genre-defining international bestseller. Writer Juan Díaz Canales and artist Juanjo Guarnido have crafted a masterclass in graphic storytelling acclaimed the world over. This collection includes all your favorite Blacksad stories previously printed in English.

DARK HORSE BOOKS
DarkHorse.com